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Adventure

"YELLOW MEN AND GOLD"

A SERIAL BY

Gouverneur Morris

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ADVENTURE for November

Volume I 1910 Number 1

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ADVENTURE *for* DECEMBER

ADVENTURE is a pretty big word — big in its allurements and big in the things you have a right to expect when you come to read our new magazine.

It's an elastic word, too, and a comprehensive one. It does not mean merely shooting big game in the jungle, or getting shipwrecked, or seeking treasure in the tropic seas. Just as certainly there are adventures in *love,* in *politics,* in *war,* in *finance,* in *diplomacy,* adventures on land and sea, adventures far from home and adventures in the next street. Stories of *romance, detective* stories, stories of *plot* and *mystery* — fact and fiction, all such fall within our scheme.

So in every number you will find instalments of two fine serials, both adventure but widely different in type; one complete adventure novelette; and some twenty short stories and articles all of true-ringing adventure.

Next month the complete novel will be ***The Border,*** by E. B. Mitchell, a humming story of an American girl, an American man of affairs, and the tangle into which they got while mixing up with frontier complications along the Austro-Italian boundary.

The two big serials will continue. Gouverneur Morris carries ***Yellow Men and Gold*** into complications that are truly enthralling, and Winifred Graham's kingly hero of ***Can a Man Be True?*** gains further hold on the reader's interest.

Albert Kinross, in ***The Disappearance of Signor Caroli,*** tells another of the whimsical adventures of the young hero who figures this month in "The Mystery of the Twenty Sacks of Coal." ***Vengeance is Mine,*** by G. W. Ogden, is an adventure story of the Western plains. ***A Poisoned Blockade,*** by J. W. Muller, is a new sort of nautical adventure, introducing a writer who will do much work for our pages.

Home Through Hades, by C. Langton Clarke, is an adventure of the Northern snows. ***The White Rook,*** by James Barr, is a striking story of tragic adventure in the eternal conflict for liberty in Russia. ***The Tragedy of Winky Wanky Woo,*** by Minnie Milne, is not a tragedy, but a comedy adventure of an actress, a journey and a romantic ending. ***Out from Barbados,*** by Robert A. Morton, is a wireless adventure.

Among the dozen others are an enticing variety of stories, fact and fiction mingled, all done with vitality, for live people who like live reading. These stories, decorated with the clever headings drawn by Mr. Falls, and bound in a brilliant cover in the true adventure spirit by Mr. Sommer, make a magazine of which we are proud and which you will be glad to have.

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ADVENTURE

Publishers' Announcement

HAVE you ever noticed how the recital of an adventure always finds ready audience?

Stories

THE witness of an accident never wants for listeners, and if peculiar and mysterious circumstances surround the accident, the interest is all the keener. The man with a story of some stirring adventure always gets the floor. Men will stop the most important discussion to listen, women will forget to rock the cradle, boys and girls will neglect any sport or game.

TRY it some time and see how it grips all kinds, all ages.

Still Young

AND the reason is that none of us ever really grows up. We are always boys and girls, a little older in years, but the same nature—alert to the new, questioning, investigating, growing, living; stirred by martial music; thrilled at sight of the fire-horses dashing madly down the street; lured by tales of subtle intrigue and splendid daring.

Heroism

IT will be a sad day for this old world if men and women ever lose this capacity to be gripped by tales of heroism. The man whose heart leaps for joy at sight of a heroic deed is the man who will act the hero when his turn comes.

Human Nature

NO, the love of adventure will never be lost out of life. It is a fundamental of human nature, just as sentiment is a fundamental, and it is almost as moving.

SO we reasoned that a magazine edited for this universal hunger of human nature for adventure

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ought to have a wide appreciation and appeal, and we decided to publish such a magazine and call it *ADVENTURE.*

IT is published in the hope and belief that hundreds of thousands of men and women will be glad to have a magazine wherein they can satisfy their natural and desirable hunger for adventure.

Good Stuff

A MAGAZINE wherein they can find adventure without being obliged to read through reams of stuff they care little about for the sake of getting a little they care a lot about.

A MAGAZINE published by the publishers of *Everybody's Magazine* and edited with the same care and concern as is *Everybody's Magazine*, but frankly made for the hours when the reader cannot work, or does not wish to, or is too weary to work. Frankly made for the reader's recreative rather than his creative hours.

Stirring

IF you care for stirring stories (and who does not?)—if you wish to get away for a brief time from the hard grind of the daily mill so that you can come back to it again with new zest, so that you can walk through the knotty problems and nagging limitations with renewed courage—get a copy of *ADVENTURE.*

YOU can get away for such a trip every month for 15 cents or you can get a season ticket entitling you to twelve trips for $1.50.

Fact-Stories Too

NO other kind of story in the magazine; just *Adventure Stories.* Fact-stories as well as fiction-stories. If you don't like that kind, don't buy; but if you do like that kind, *ADVENTURE* is sure to delight you.

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ADVENTURE
VOL·I NOVEMBER NO·1
1910

YELLOW MEN and GOLD

by GOUVERNEUR MORRIS

AUTHOR OF "THE VOICE IN THE RICE"

EDITOR'S NOTE: Among all the stories of adventure ever written there are a few that stand out in every reader's memory—"Robinson Crusoe," "The Three Musketeers," "The Prisoner of Zenda," for instance, in their respective fields. We all think first of "Treasure Island" as the greatest story of plunder and piracy and tropic adventure on land and sea. Then after a time came "Moran of the Lady Letty," Frank Norris's fine tale of the Pacific, named by many as the best adventure story since "Treasure Island." And now, ten years later, we in the office of ADVENTURE take satisfaction in the belief that "Yellow Men and Gold" is the best since "Moran." You will find in it the same "sit-up-at-night-till-you-finish-it" quality that has made its brilliant predecessors famous.

CHAPTER I

HOW SUCCESS RUINED ME

AS A SCHOONER among the South Islands, heeling to the honest Trade, skims unaffectedly from port to port, asking but small room of the sea and intent only upon her narrow destiny and little interests; so, I know well, ought a narrative of adventure, treasure-seeking and violent meetings of men, to start, to proceed and to end. Yet from the very veraciousness of those events about to be related, it seems necessary to begin cumbersomely; as if the vessel to maneuver were a three-decker, the wind baffling and the channel, between harbor and open sea, tortuous and involved. And there will not be any plain sailing until well after the murder in the gully and the examination of the crew-man's wallet.

I had determined while still in those gawky teens, from which so far as concerns locomotion I shall never emerge, to be an author. And I wrote from that period

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until my thirtieth year with assiduous patience and distinguished unsuccess. I saw the closest friends of my youth crawling—but always upward—upon the muddy slopes of banking and brokerage; coming into dazzling legacies, marrying wealthily, and steadily thickening about the waist. But for me those fifteen years had been devilish lean, and hard to bear: hardest to bear were the successes of others who wrote even worse than I; and I have thought (oh, in bitterness if you like, and in envy) that to be a successful author it is necessary only to be heavy, involved, filled to the brim with misinformation, pompous and prudishly afraid of naked words.

I had private means (the meanest kind) until I was twenty-seven; then, luckily, pigs of mine that went to market were bought by the butcher, slaughtered, gutted, debristled, adorned with greens and offered as honest pork to the very hungry. As the difficulties of raising pigs grew, so did the market for them, and the butchers paid generously enough. And I skimped from the first of one month to the first of the next. But to have labored with courage and devotion for fifteen years, to have remained in love during that whole period with all of life and with one girl, and at the end of it to be still skimping, must furnish the stoutest stomach with the food of discouragement.

During my thirtieth year, and not many months after a first real success with the public, I allowed hope to die out in my breast for a little interval; and love, which is the same thing. I said good-by to my first memory of her, and to my last; to that mischievous rolling ball of femininity in a blue and white blanket coat, burbling and prattling, that I had toted, closely hugged, in my thin boy arms; to that later picture of her, wonderfully slender, in frosty white, with a great black hat, and innumerable little terriers that dogged her steps across a lawn set with dandelions (as the heavens with stars) and looked up into her face. She had in one hand a pair of pruning-shears, for we had said good-by, and it was in her mind to comfort me with a rose.

As my train crawled and halted and halted and crawled through the snow-sheds into California, the magazine containing my two page "Tale of a Lady's Hat" was put on sale, and I had not been a month in San Francisco without learning that on the whole the world was the merrier for the trifle, and that, in the telling American, I had "made a hit."

Believing upon this earnest that I could henceforth and forever face a greater embarrassment of bills, I went to housekeeping in the little village of San Mateo. There was for house a one-story bungalow that seemed to have been built, walls, roof and chimney, of cloth-of-gold roses and that stood in a seven-eighths' acre of almonds and English walnuts planted in alternation. The tiny estate was bounded on the north, or roadside, by scarlet passion vines and sweet-peas, on the east (toward the village) by a hedge of heliotrope eight feet high, on the west by honeysuckle that concealed all but the white-roses roof of Mr. Carrol's house, and on the south by an abrupt, dry and stonily lined gully that had once been the San Mateo River, now dammed many miles above to be a reservoir. To the farther side of the gully came a great screen of bay trees, live oak, buckeyes and underwood—a boundary of the great Bird ranch, and containing in its immediate midst the hallowed and periwinkled ground where, as the monument solemnly testifies, rested from

1852——1867
The Body of the First Bird

(under which the species had been designated by the pencil of some Iconoclast as the "Dodo"), and where continues to rest, during the heat of the day, a vast flock of tame quail.

My cook, housemaid, butler, chambermaid, gardener and occasional adversary at a quiet game of cards was a Chinaman named Fong, who washed himself all over with soap four times a day, owned seventeen tooth-brushes and smoked opium every afternoon from five-thirty to six-fifteen. He was a practical, saving man, and with my own eyes I have seen quail, of the Bird's tame flock, cross the gully, intent upon a trail of wheat, hop solemnly up the steps into our very kitchen, and emerge no more.

My life, for some months wonderfully happy and hopeful, consisted of hard work from nine till one, leisurely walks back into the hills, and an occasional julep with my neighbor Mr. Carrol. But when I had begun once more to send work to the magazines, sure now, after a little success, of a

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ready market, life began once more to be complicated. For, far from finding a ready market, I found that such a market as I had had was gone—struck from the map. One and all the manuscripts came back, and one and all the editors wrote to the effect that the stories were very well—capital, indeed—but that having set a certain standard by the "Tale of a Lady's Hat" I must live up to it. "Readers all over the country," wrote one editor, "are infatuated by that blissful little story, ourselves have laughed over it till we cried, and cried till we laughed. They want more—just like that, and you can give them more—if you only will."

At first such letters made me furious; for I neither could write another tale like that of the "Lady's Hat," nor wished to. But when I realized finally that my wares were become absolutely unsalable, though of better quality, I think, than many which I had managed to sell before, helpless fury yielded by inches to an empty feeling of despair. Here was I, no longer a beginner, but a man of letters, who had at least had his success, and who instead of being assembled and set up thereby, had been broken and cast aside.

A time came, and with swift strides, when I was unable to pay my bills. And there is, I think, no mental torture so cruel as that—even to the half-way honest. Nor could I think (and I had, I thank God, the courage to try) of any other business upon which I could embark and make a living. I was over six feet high, but without an ounce of strength, thin as a rail and grotesquely awkward; prodigiously wanting in mathematics and all the other branches of common sense. I had worked, and failed; I had loved, and lost; and still I had the vain wish to hold up my head in the world, while I should remain in it, and to pay my bills. It was evident that I must face my creditors one at a time, and humble myself with explanations and promises, and upon that thought I lay awake for whole nights and writhed. It was also evident that common honesty demanded that I turn such talents as I possessed prostitute, and write tales as nearly like that of the "Lady's Hat" as despair and necessity could manage. Once a sharp stickler for the proprieties, I have never, since those hard days, sat in thoughtless judgment upon women who walk the streets.

Yet I was in worse plight than I knew, for having decided and taken comfort from the decision that if my talent must play the light woman it should be cheerfully, I visited an oculist in the city to be refitted with working glasses, and learned, out of an absolutely clear sky in that direction, that if I did not leave books, writing and indoor confinement very strictly alone for a year or more, I might go blind.

I staggered out of that devil's office with hope dead in me, and love; and alive only a kind of wild hatred of God and man, and the most unmanly and childish self-pity and despair. I think I was the most self-centered wreck that ever went from San Francisco to San Mateo (and there must have been many after the great earthquake). I think I could have trampled upon a sick child if one had thwarted me. But I hope not.

I did not at once enter the bungalow, fearing to face the light, or to see myself in a mirror, but shambled aimlessly among the walnut and almond trees, until finally I stood upon the edge of the gully, with half a thought to cast myself head-first upon the stones at the bottom. Had the height been sixty feet and sure death, I would have done so. But it was a scant thirty—tempting but uncertain. And I fancied myself half-dead only, among the stones, a moaning failure in suicide as in life. It is not sure if I moaned aloud or not; but it is sure that something *did* moan at the bottom of the gully; and I started back in a terror the more unreasonable if you consider that I was in the very midst of hobnobbing with self-slaughter.

CHAPTER II

THE MURDER IN THE GULLY

THE silhouette of Fong upon the drawn shade of the kitchen window (in the very act of brushing his teeth) was like a reenforcement. I shouted loudly for him; then sat down on the edge of the gully, slung my legs over and slipped and scrambled to the bottom. It was too dark down there for definite perceptions; and as the moaning had ceased, I stood still, and at a loss. Nor was it until the light of Fong's lantern shone suddenly into the place that I found my very next step must have been upon the body of a man.

The heart in the body was beating; but

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when Fong had descended and brought the lantern close, dreadful stabs were disclosed in its stomach and chest, and the stones among which it lay were amuck with blood. I was not experienced in these realities, but I perceived the approach of death as distinctly as that of an embodied person.

"Fong," I said excitedly, "go back home quick-step and telephone doctor and policeman!"

Fong touched, with a finger like the stem of a much smoked clay pipe, a pocket that had been turned inside out.

"Dam much rob!" he said and, turning, made the precipitous ascent with astonishing alacrity.

Even while attempting to plug with my handkerchief what seemed the deepest and bloodiest stab, I saw that every one of the man's pockets had been turned inside out, and the tail of my eye caught the face of a gold repeater lying between the stones, and, nearer the body, that of Washington from the midst of a greenback. Even in those confused seconds it struck me as odd that these things should have been left behind, if the crime, as the inside-out pockets suggested, had robbery for its motive. I had packed the half of my handkerchief into the wound, with my forefinger, as you pack tobacco into a pipe, when suddenly the man's eyes came open and he said in a wild voice:

"Take it easy, boys—they've cracked!"

And he struggled to raise himself.

It will show the state of mind that I was in to record that I asked him if he was hurt. But the idiotic query seemed to steady him, and slowly and painfully he brought his eyes to a focus, until they rested on my face.

"Don't know you," he said quietly. . . . "Thanks" . . .

I bent close to him and said as clearly as I could:

"Who did it?"

"Oh, hell!" he said; but in the merest whisper. "Cut it out. *They* got me . . . it's up the gully under a spotted stone . . . it's yours, my friend, don't know your name. . . . Don't let *them* get it. . . . Burn all papers in the wallet except it——" With that the reason went clean out of his eyes, and he rose, easily and lightly, to a sitting position, and turning his head as if he saw some one, spoke in the most sarcastic, wearied drawl:

"Harvey," he said, "*you* aren't supposed to be helping yourself to ice-cream . . . you are supposed to be rowing number three in the Yale boat" . . . and then, but in far crisper tones, a note of deep regret in them: "Just as you say, Mr. Cook——" His eyes closed and his head rolled over on his breast, but to be raised once more with a kind of splendid bold alertness.

"Give way!" he cried in a great voice, and toppling gently over on his side, his soul slipped from him and was soon, perhaps, in old Charon's boat pulling out from the Stygian shore.

While I waited with the dead man, my neighbor, Mr. Carrol, attracted doubtless by that great shout of "give way," came to the edge of the gully.

"That you, Parrish?" he said.

"Come down," I said. "There's been a murder."

Carrol, a thick-set, fattish great man, descended with difficulty and sharp breathing.

"That's hell, isn't it?" he said.

"For some person or persons—yes," I said.

"Was he dead when you got to him?"

"Not quite," I said. "He lived, perhaps, four minutes after I found him."

"Stuck him in the stomach, didn't they?" said Carrol. "My!"

He knelt by the corpse and felt of the upper arms, thighs and calves.

"Lusty brute, wasn't he?"

"He wasn't a brute," I said; "he was a gentleman and he rowed in the Yale boat—when Bob Cook was coach. He said as much——"

"Said?" exclaimed Carrol, his eyes round with astonishment. "Did he say who did it?" He snapped the question at me like a whip. But I interpreted his tone as that natural to a good citizen upon an occasion of crime.

"No," I said.

Carrol passed the back of his hand across his forehead.

"Too bad!" he said mildly.

"Yes," I said, "too damned bad!"

"Did he talk sense?" asked my neighbor suddenly. "Or rave?"

"Why," said I, "some of it sounded like sense, but it wasn't about sensible things."

"No dying messages, I suppose?" Just what *did* he say?"

"Nothing important, I fancy," said I. "Something about thanking me for trying to help him."

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"Dying men," said Carrol, "sometimes say very interesting things—especially those that have lived rough—as this poor cuss has —seems to have," he corrected himself.

And I thought to myself that what the dying crew-man had said about the wallet under the spotted stone was extremely interesting, and much too interesting to be divulged to the first questioner. Indeed the secret, if it was a secret, or anything but raving, had been given to me for my very own, as God could witness, and if it was worth giving it was possibly worth keeping. So much I perceived logically in my unstrung and nervous state of mind.

"At first glance," Carrol broke in upon my reflections, "it looks like ordinary robbery—see that watch and that greenback. It looks as if something particular had been wanted—doesn't it?"

"Just what I think," said I.

"I wonder what?" Carrol mused.

I thought that I could have given Carrol information on the point. But I was mistaken. For at that very moment Carrol knew more about the contents of the crew-man's wallet than I did. But what he did know, much as that was, was not sufficient for his purposes. He sighed, and looked for a long time into the dead man's face.

"How unnecessary," he said presently, "how damned unnecessary!"

By some unaccountable freak of *rigor mortis* the crew-man's eyes suddenly opened as if worked by springs, and Carrol jerked himself backward as if he had been struck at.

Talking seemed more comfortable than silence in the presence of the staring eyes, and I said, trying to pitch my voice in its natural key,

"Lucky this isn't the Middle Ages, Carrol. You know they believed that a corpse bled in the presence of its murderer, and opened its eyes, and went through all sorts of dumb-crambo accusations."

"I never heard of the eye part," said Carrol, and he drew a deep breath.

"Yes," I said. "But just before the eyes opened a lot of blood welled suddenly out of one of those cuts. It nearly gave me a fit —I thought for a second it was something alive. It looked like a mouse coming out of its hole."

"Don't say that sort of thing!" said Carrol. "I'm feeling pretty sick as it is. I want to scream and run away." A great spasm went through him from head to foot. And he tore his hat from his head and covered the dead man's face.

CHAPTER III

THE SPOTTED STONE

THE early morning saw me, so recently a candidate for suicide, striking up the dry bed of the San Mateo River from the spot where the murder had been done; my eyes peeled, as the saying is, for spotted stones; and hope once more alive in my breast. Indeed, I had withdrawn so far from absolute despair as to be in a whirlwind of school-boy spirits. My imagination had been wildly at work during the night upon the wallet and its contents.

"Burn all the papers but *It*," the crew-man had said.

"It," then, if actual money, might be a bill of large denomination; but with that the imagination would not rest. A valuable patent had suggested itself, or a valuable principle to be patented; the location of a rich gold mine, or a coal mine. Something, anyhow, that was worth doing murder for. On the other hand, for a dampener, the reason that suffices one murderer is not sufficient to the next. Some men will kill for a few dirty dollars; some only for many bright thousands; and some again if merely to put the final quietus upon the tongue of a nagging wife. I tried to hold my desires in check, and kept reiterating, "A couple of thousand will help—just a couple of thousand." But they would not be so snubbed and, together with that ray of hope that had been rekindled in my breast, were ever dancing like mad among the millions.

The ancient river-bed was thickly laid with stones and contained more than one that was spotted. Indeed, had every spotted stone that I turned over concealed a dollar bill, I must soon have lost interest in the crew-man's wallet. I had, I think, pictured the particular stone wanted as greenish black, very thickly and regularly overlaid with white polka-dots, and flatish; yet it might be a white stone, spotted with black; or it might be shaped like a boulder, or a pyramid. Whatever its shape, size or appearance, however, I was determined to find it, following the river-bed, if necessary, all the stumbly miles to the reservoir and back. But it was aching, hard work, and I

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was very sharp with Providence for having supplied me with so weak and awkward a frame and with so cowardly a pair of lungs. The more so that there was nothing wrong with them but a chronic aversion to doing their work cheerfully in the world. I could not dog-trot it for a city block without their losing all ambition and flying into a passion of protest. Indeed, coming suddenly upon a hundredweight stone, yellowish and darkly spotted like the hide of a leopard, I was obliged to put off the moment of turning it; and, instead, sat upon it, for it looked a soft comfortable stone, and rested.

The banks of the gully were at this point of a negligible height and clothed with a dense but not tall vegetation of scrubby buckeyes, nightshade and riotous wild-grape vines; and a little above where I sat, and a little below, the gully itself turned off sharply; so that I occupied, as it were, the center of a stony open space in the midst of a forest.

Now this same weakness of limb and lung which so handicapped my quest was to prove instrumental in its safe accomplishment; for had I turned over the stone upon which I sat when I wished to, instead of waiting till I could, I must have been discovered in the very act by my neighbor, Mr. Carrol, who came now suddenly into view around the upper bend, at a very slow pace, his small bright eyes ranging penetratingly among the stones.

"Hallo!" said I, when he had drawn near.

He started violently, as indeed the most innocent person might have done under the circumstances, and made the familiar gesture of passing his hand across his forehead without actually touching it. But he pulled himself together almost at once, and seating himself near me, "Hot, isn't it?" he said, and flung off his hat and ran his fingers through his hair.

"Scientific people," said he, "believe that somewhere on this peninsula there is a vein of coal. I sometimes take a day off and go botanizing after it."

"It's like me," said I; "I have been geologizing for wild flowers. And I'm quite blown, thank you."

"By the way," he said, "I'm expecting some odd characters to lunch; would you care to look them over, with your constant view to fiction?"

"I'd like to look in *after* lunch," I said.

"What are they—anarchists like last time?"

Carrol grinned.

"I do have the damndest friends, don't I?" said he. "No, these are three young bummers, and one of them—Lunch—has got hold of a schooner, for a bad debt; the other two have chipped in a little money, and they've made up their minds to cruise the Gulf of California for ambergris and pearls." He shot a quick glance at me. "Fancy," he said, "they've got a diving-suit!"

"Have they?" said I innocently. He had taken a shot at me, I learned later, but had missed the mark, easy though it was.

"The funniest part," he went on, "is this. I'm going with them."

"You don't mean it!" I exclaimed, for I had regarded Carrol as a sensible matter-of-fact man, above any childish impulse.

"Why," said he, with a frankness that was attractive in him, "I'm so dead broke I can't see straight; and I'm so fat I can't walk straight, and I'm so down on my luck that I can't think straight."

"I have always pictured you," said I, "on the very verge itself of prosperity."

"I am," he said, "always all that and never anything more. Of course I don't believe in the pearl and ambergris part of the trip, any more than I believe that a beautiful woman," he smiled ruefully, "could learn to love me for my shape alone; but I do believe that sea food and sea air and expecially sea work would make a new man of me—a slim godlike man."

"Like me," said I, "with chuckle knees and a backache and a pair of bellows that can just put a candle out at the fifth blow."

"Besides," said Carrol, "I owe a lot of dirty little bills, and they fidget me. You'll look in after lunch, then?"

I nodded, and he rose.

"Are you going any farther?" he asked.

"I think yes," said I. "Why?"

"Why," said he, "I seem to have lost my wallet. It's too much bother, and I haven't time, to go back and look for it, on the chance. Still I want it, for old sake's sake."

"What sort of a wallet is it?" I asked.

"My *dear* man," said Carrol, "you speak as if you expected to find fifty wallets. But mine is to be recognized by the fact that it contains absolutely no money—and a few letters that you may read if you wish, but which will make you think the worse of me. They are from a beautiful woman,"

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he explained, "who loves me, when I have money."

Then with a cheerful "So long!" he waved a pudgy hand and was soon out of sight around the lower bend.

I was now rested, and rose to the work of turning over the stone upon which I had been sitting. By good fortune, for my strength was not up to the task, it was not deeply bedded and had a convenient ledge for the hands to grip; and at the very first tug it came half over—and I let go, with a startled gasp, and it dropped back into place.

The finding of a snake so close to my hand would have produced an effect upon me very similar to that caused by an actual sight of that which I sought. And for some moments I could not make the further effort necessary to gain possession of the crew-man's wallet, but stood aloof from the stone, wholly out of breath, and with a wildly beating heart.

Then once more I bent to it, and this time turned it over—and saw the wallet, released from pressure, expand like a live thing that draws a deep breath.

I noted only that it was of pigskin, darkly stained by age and sweat; and then, you will guess, I lost no time in going through its contents!

But you have guessed wrong; for with the issue in my very hands, I had not at that moment the heart to face it. My highest hopes seemed to crowd about and implore me to wait. Thus when at Chrismas-time a boy receives an envelope directed in the writing of his rich uncle, he does not at once open it, but exults a while with the hope that the check it contains will be double that of the year before. So instead of going through with the business then and there, I slipped the wallet into my inside pocket and buttoned my jacket over that, which, in moments of supreme excitement, I am pleased to call my chest.

CHAPTER IV

THE CREW-MAN'S WALLET

I TOOK out the wallet in my bedroom, having bolted the door, and shook the contents of its various pockets upon the bed. The inventory follows:

1. A part of an envelope, unaddressed and scrawled over with telephone numbers;
2. A whole envelope, blank, but not very clean;
3. An elastic band;
4. A much soiled square of chewing-gum, make and flavor unknown;
5. A fish-hook, with the point broken off;
6. A copy of amatory Spanish verses in a swift female hand;
7. A French two-franc piece;
8. A slip of paper, with a design in pencil, neatly executed for an elaborate, but undecipherable, monogram;
9. An old joke cut out of a newspaper, and
10. and last, the half of a dime, cut clean off as by a pair of shears.

You will imagine that I made sure to have overlooked nothing before I flung the wallet disgustedly on the floor and gave way to a fit of contemptuous laughter. I had, indeed, builded my hopes very high, and to have their fanciful structure fall so grotesquely flat was nothing less than sickening. Yet, unwilling to accept defeat, I once more went through the wallet, turning its pockets literally inside out and poking my long fingers into the crevices and along the seams. So violent and angry was the search that I tore the rotten leather in places, and it was from between the edges of such a tear that I perceived suddenly a portion of paper surface criss-crossed with the minutest of writing in the blackest of ink. Nor could I doubt that I had uncovered, by an eleventh-hour accident, that mysterious "It" which had cost the crew-man his life.

The paper, on being extricated proved a rectangular slip of a thin and shiny manufacture, six inches long by five inches wide. It had been folded lengthwise once; the double leather between two of the compartments of the wallet had been ripped along the seam to receive it and resewed with perfect fidelity to the original thread and to the needle-holes. As for the writing, with which both sides of the paper were closely crossed, it was miraculously even, and so fine as to require for decipherment a reading-glass; and one far stronger than I possessed would have made the task far easier.

One whole side of the sheet, and all but a few lines of the other, was covered by an inventory list of articles of value; with the following note at the beginning:

Translation of original inventory, now in the Royal Library, Madrid, of articles of gold, silver, etc., consigned by Pizarro, from Peru, in the galleon *Espiritu Santo*, to the King of Spain.

The inventory as a whole read like some wild fiction, but I have not here the space

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to set it all down. Here are a few items, chosen at random:

3. Small box of emeralds, carved in imitation of roses;
7. A palace wainscoting of gold, laid upon wood;
8. A mortar and pestle of gold;
18. A little tree of gold, hung with jeweled fruits;
23. A gold door, cunningly carved with bestial scenes;
29. Two Peruvian princesses, fifteen years of age;
30. Six great chests, containing their raiment and jewels;
33. An Inca's head in a cask of spirits;
37. Eight thousand pounds of gold, cast into ingots;
38. Eight thousand pounds of silver, cast into ingots;
50. One great chest, containing divers golden vessels, ewers and services.

And at the very end of the long inventory was the following priceless information:

The *Espiritu Santo* was lost in shoal water off a volcanic rock or islet that lies in latitude —— longitude ——. Fragments of the vessel may be discerned by the use of a marine-glass, in the midst of the cove at the Northwest corner of the islet, and much of the treasure might be recovered by the use of a diving-suit and a little patience. Written this —— day of —— —— in the prison of Sing Sing for my only friend in this world, Roy Cunningham. If my memory has played tricks with me, Roy, it is only to the extent of an item or two in the inventory. The latitude and longitude is O. K. Pray for my horned soul, and God bless you! This time to-morrow I shall be—where? And you, perhaps, on your way to the Straits of Magellan.

I think a man's imagination must be a spiritless nag not to be set galloping by such a spur. Mine, I know, went a-flying to the closing scenes of the great Inca's life (and very white they looked against their black and amber background of Spanish lies and treachery). I saw as in a stage drop the bearded Spanish men staggering up the galleon's gangways under the chests of ingots and gems; the cask with the Inca's head, lightly handled, like a sample of the new country's pickles for the Sovereign. The golden door with its bestial carvings; that exquisite little tree of gold with its jeweled fruits; and those jeweled fruits the little brown princesses, ripe for the plucking, with their round eyes full of wonder; and I sailed with the laboring galleon in the heel of the trades, with the unknown seas upon the one hand and the unknown mountains upon the other; and sailed from under the bright skies into a moaning, gray, dripping region; and saw the waves broken and subdued among the monstrous seaweeds of Magellan; and the ravines filled with dark and somber forests; and for a moment, cleared of mist and fog, the eternal snows low upon the mountains; and saw the gull and the albatross loafing into the storm blast; and heard the thunder of breakers; and felt in my very soul that earthquake sickening shock when the galleon struck; and felt her sink beneath my feet, and go down, with her colossal treasure, and the princesses, locked, perhaps, in each other's arms, poor kids, and with the whole of her hell-bound crew.

No, not the whole of it; for there must have been one at the least to escape with the bearings of where the tall galleon lay. And I followed him more vaguely, and pictured him suddenly struck dead for his secret, as the crew-man had been struck in the gully. And I came swiftly down the hundreds of years with the secret, and the intriguings for it, and the bloody murders and the wild passions that it must have loosed. Came down, indeed, to the reality of the little bedroom in which I was pacing like a wild animal; and there my imagination stuck fast. For I could no more think out a logical way to lift the treasure from that far away floor of the sea than I could fly. Who would capitalize the weak-bodied, spiritless author or trust him to raise from the deep that treasure which had defied the men of action these many hundred years?

I soon saw that I was in no condition at that time to focus upon rational issues; so I slipped the crew-man's legacy beneath the carpet; burned as directed such papers as the wallet contained; and the wallet itself; bathed my flushed face again and again with cold water; had a snack of lunch (it was now half-past two o'clock) and started over to Mr. Carrol's house, to hear the talk and make the acquaintance or his adventurous friends.

CHAPTER V

THE OWNERS OF THE *CALLIOPE*

AS I TURNED the corner of his house I met Carrol stepping off the bowery porch, his arms filled with bottles of beer, and his face flushed.

"Parrish," said he, "we're out under the big buckeye celebrating. Take some of these, there's a dear man! . . . Since I saw

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you——" I relieved him of a portion of the bottles and we proceeded toward the great buckeye from the other side of which came the sound of gleeful chuckles. "Since I saw you," Carrol repeated, "I have sold the old homestead; a man and his wife, lungers, I fancy, dropped in out of the golden East—Noo Yok— they said, I fancy it is in Persia—and took one good look at Fat Carrol's house and lot and bought them out of hand. Hence the celebration. It's the smooth monkeys that are to be paid over in the morning that have made Fat Carrol so happy and free from care. Gentlemen—" as we rounded the sweeping branches of the buckeye and came upon a group composed of three live civilians and some twenty or thirty dead soldiers, as the saying is—"let me present Mr. Parrish—not Max, the pictator—but James, the merry-companion author of the 'Tale of a Lady's Hat.' Mr. Parrish, Mr. Joseph Lynch, commonly known as 'Nine Points of the Law'—or 'Ten Pins' for short. Mr. Paul Granger Craven, the well-known amateur pugilist, and Mr. Willing Todd, the pet of the natatorium and the Columbus of the Poodle Dog and the Barbary Coast."

The gentlemen were all in the thirties, I guessed, with the exception of Carrol, who had the look of a youthful fifty; and I have never sat down to beer with a more cheerful and debonair quartet. They were vulgarians, if you like, the type that shaves the back of the neck and selects in conversation, when there are many names for a spade, that which is the least agreeable to the ear, though often the most connotative to the mind. They had a kind of clannish humor, as if they had spent much of their lives in various unities of interest; and I could not but admire, and indeed envy, the elation of spirits into which the approaching project of their adventure threw them. Yet I detected, too, beneath their habit of turning the issue, whatever its nature, into a joke, a kind of underlying vein of stubborn determination, a kind of ready-at-need quality that led me to think them the very types of man best suited to a catch-as-catch-can enterprise. And I thought them honest as men go, with a distinct preference for giving the odds and seeing fair play. And this in spite of the fact that for the more exquisite relations in nature they had no more regard or respect than so many dogs. They had planned, for instance, casually and as a matter of course, to take a couple of women upon the cruise; and, listening to the argument upon which the plan was abandoned, I heard many shrewd phrases of expediency, but not so much as one word against the morals of the thing.

"We'll just have to grin and bear the times when they wouldn't have been in the way," exclaimed Mr. Willing Todd, and he tilted the tag-ends of a beer bottle into his mouth.

"And when we get back," Craven mollified himself for the disappointment which the decision had cost him, "with pearls and ambergris and shark-fins, you'll hear the breakers roar along the Barbary coast!"

They made so light of the serious sides of the adventure, and so sure of its nebulous sides, that from the first I saw myself sailing with them in spirit; and, in spite of that allocative document hidden beneath the carpet in my bedroom, the approximateness of *their* quest—the schooner provisioned in the harbor, and manned; Carrol's bills about to be paid; indeed, the fact of the thing, made me lose sight for the time being of the more alluring, if remote, aspects of my own undigested adventure. Indeed, I was thrown into such an envy and restlessness by their tale that twice I was on the point of saying, "Come, gentlemen, make me a partner with you, and we shall sail—not for the Gulf of California—but for the Straits of Magellan, and I shall tell you why!"

And I fancied excusing myself, and reappearing with the memorandum of treasure, and flinging it like a bomb-shell into their midst. It must be that my face had upon it an envious and excited expression; for Carrol, who, I noticed, attended with the most flattering attention whenever I spoke, suddenly clapped his hand heartily upon my knee. And,

"Parrish," said he, "chuck your troubles and come along!"

His voice had in it a kind and friendly ring.

"Oh, I couldn't," I said quickly, and a little nervously. "I couldn't very well run away, owing money right and left."

"Now look here," he said, "we need another man."

"But not me," said I. "I can't contribute anything; and I'm abjectly useless."

"If I said, then," said Carrol, "that

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during our little talks across the fence and our little visits and all, I had grown fond of you, Parrish, you wouldn't believe me?"

I can not deny that I was flattered and moved.

"Look here," he said, "take a bit of a walk."

We rose, and he thrust his arm through mine and led me away. The others, it seemed to me, had exchanged glances; but I laid it to their wish to express that Carrol had drunk too much beer.

"Now, Jim," said Carrol, "let me say first that your face is an open book and that I can read what's passing in your mind—when it isn't above my level. If you can deny that you're in deep trouble and at your wit's end, you're a damned liar——" He pressed my arm affectionately.

"Well, then I am," I blurted out. "I can't sell my stuff, I owe money, and the doctor says I must live in the open air away from books or take my chances of going blind."

We walked a little farther without saying a word; yet Carrol kept talking to me by that firm pressure on the arm.

"Well," he said, after a while, "what's the matter with the cruise of the *Calliope* for open air?"

"Even if I could pay my bills and go," said I, "I'd be a burden."

"Not you, Jim," said Carrol. And after another pause, "What do you owe?" he asked. And I told him. He swore profanely.

"Good God!" he said, "you've *looked* the liabilities of a Trust Co., while you've only incurred those of an apple woman. My dear boy, say you'll come, and out of the money I'm to be paid to-morrow I'll fix you up."

"You will?" I said.

"Sure," said he.

"Carrol," I said, greatly moved, "it's wonderful to find such kindness among strangers, in a far place. But the kindness sha'n't be all on one side. Your cruise is the chanciest kind of a thing—isn't it? What if I can lay a better course for you all; what if I can tell you where a Spanish treasure ship lies in shoal water——"

I ought then and there to have realized my folly, for Carrol drew such a breath as a man draws on reaching the surface of the water after being half buried in the depths. But he had himself so quickly in hand again that I suspected nothing.

"You haven't drunk too much, have you?" he said humorously.

"You remember," I said, "you asked me what the murdered man said before he died? Well, I didn't tell you. Can you guess why he was murdered?"

"Who—I?" Carrol seemed startled and I laughed.

"He was murdered for the secret of the treasure ship; but he had hidden it. And I found it."

"Now calm down," said Carrol, "and switch to simple language."

"Come into my house," I said, "and we'll let the facts do the talking."

While Carrol was going over the crewman's legacy through my reading-glass he got redder and redder in the face. He looked giddy, and again and again passed a hand across his forehead. Yet his only comment from start to finish was a kind of shocked reiteration of the phrase "Just x-cuse me— Just x-cuse me!"

But, having finished, he rose, and banged his fist upon the table.

"My God!" he said, "my God!"

"Do you think," I ventured, "that maybe there's nothing in it?"

"Think, Lucky Penny, old boy—think—no—I don't—I can't! But I'll tell you one thing. Whoever did one murder for that, would do another quick as winking!"

"Good God!" I said, "I hadn't thought of that! But no one knows I have it but you, Carrol."

"How do you know—nobody knows? Don't you suppose *they* know you were the first man to be on the scene? The papers had it—don't you suppose you've been watched and marked ever since? My God, Jim, you've got a nerve!"

He picked up a savage-looking kris that I used for opening letters, and fell to testing the point with his thumb; but his thought seemed far from the business.

"There's nothing to prevent one of them walking into this bungalow to-night and sticking that into you, my boy!" And he flung the ugly thing sharply back among the litter on the table. I noticed that he was very white; and I thought the pallor flattering, as showing the sharpness with which my possible danger affected him.

"Now," said he, "you put together what things you can carry in a couple of suitcases, and you go straight up to Frisco, take Fong to help you, and you go to the

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Palace, and you keep in the palm-room where there is always a crowd; until I *come!* Don't have anything to do with any one you don't know."

"And how about my affairs in this town?" I said.

"Get your bills together," said he, "and leave them with me."

Being orderly by habit, I had them ready in a neat packet, which Carrol thrust, with a nod, into his pocket.

"But do you really think I'm in danger?" I asked.

"Jim," he said earnestly, "you *bet!* When a man's got the wealth of Ormus and of Ind in his clothes he's in danger, and you may take pen and ink and write it down."

I glanced involuntarily into the corners and out of the windows of the peaceful and familiar room.

"Was that poor cuss in the gully ever in danger, Jim?" said Carrol. "I ask you? Now do as I say!"

"Indeed I will," said I, with a kind of coward eagerness. "But I'm glad you're in the know, Carrol, because I'm an innocent, and it never would have entered my head that any one but the butcher or the baker had it in for me."

"Jim," said Carrol, "we'll come for you about seven-thirty, in the palm-room, mind; and we'll make a body-guard until we get you safe aboard the *Calliope*." He turned to go, but returned upon a thought.

"Look," said he, "will I tell the boys now, or later, when we're all aboard? It's for you to say."

"Oh," said I, "later, when we're under way—don't you think—and surprise them, good!"

"You bet," said Carrol, and he smiled broadly. "But what a child you are."

Again he turned to go, and once more came back.

"We've got to keep pretty well together," he said, "but I'm afraid the boys are for making a night of it—liquor and ladies, and all that—you see it's their last night ashore, and you see——"

"I don't judge for others," I said. "But that's reason enough for not telling them—till later."

"Right," said Carrol, "and you and I'll eschew the bottle and keep the bunch in hand *if* we can."

He left me, and I went at my work of selection and packing with an ardor not diminished by the thought that those who had not stopped at one murder would not balk at another. But it heartened me some to hear, now and again, through the open window the bursts of laughter from the jolly companions under the buckeye tree. Indeed, one burst of it, not long after Carrol must have rejoined them, was so heartfelt and contagious that in the midst of folding a blue flannel shirt I burst out laughing myself.

But if I had known what the joke was, at which I laughed with so much enjoyment, the hour of seven-thirty would not have seen me impatiently waiting in the palm-room of the Palace Hotel for the appearance of Carrol and the joint-owners of the *Calliope*.

CHAPTER VI

I "DO" THE TOWN

ALL cities are cities of dreadful night. Yet if palms were awarded for being dreadful, I think the first would be flung at the feet of San Francisco. I had often delighted to deal firmly in fiction with what I fancied to be the darker sides of life. And I had hung a little upon the outskirts of vice, dined in its least notorious restaurants or drunk my cocktail across its outer bars. But of wickedness, of which I had thought myself not the least piercing observer, I knew, until the later hours of that night, nothing. And, oh, the faces and the jargon and the dark places and the thirsts and the lechery that I saw that night as in a hideous revelation—a crowd of half living, half putrid maggots feeding like mad things upon the very guts of the city! Vice I saw without the gilding; and learned the abyss between what is not respectable and what is lost.

Nor was I happy in thinking that my companions for the voyage should have thought that the scenes through which they passed me would—oh, not please me, perhaps, but appeal strongly to my sense of the picturesque. "Let's have a look at Sky's," one would say. "Parrish ought to see that." Or "Let's show him the Sink," or the like. To my shame be it said that I had not the *face* to say that I was displeased and unhappy. And, sick at heart, I suffered myself to be led from one abomination to the next. You will hear it said that such an experience has its value. But I think not.

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I should like to see at once very much less reticence in the world—and very much more.

As we "did" the town—ripe for damnation—my three younger showmen became gradually drunk. And I myself, to keep up heart, had taken more than I was accustomed to or could well "carry," as the saying is. Indeed, I recollect being pulled away from a haggish young woman whom I had suddenly accosted at the corner of a street and was exhorting to lead a better life. And I was very sharp with Carrol for interfering with my efforts to do a little good in the world, and would have broken from him and gone back to renew the sermon had I not heard the woman calling upon Carrol to "hide that —— —— long-legged spider or she'd cut its heart out."

"Come along, Jim," said Carrol, "you're drunk."

"I'm not," said I, "not in the least. I was never more rational in my life. You can start any argument you like and see if I'm not, to prove it."

"I don't give a whoop if you are or not," said Carrol.

I tried to answer him, but gave it up owing to a sudden and wearisome thickening among my vocal cords. And I fell to counting just how many drinks I had had, and then was startled to think that so very few should have had so grave an effect upon me; for, in addition to the thickening sensation among the vocal cords, my feet had become terribly heavy, and my limbs as if made of fluids. "Surely," I thought, "six or more drinks of whiskey couldn't do it!" And I wanted to ask Carrol's opinion, and could not. I had come to a dead halt, with Lynch laughing and holding me by one arm, and Carrol, with a kind of expectant expression, holding me by the other. Craven and Todd faced me, flushed and wild-eyed.

"Well," said Carrol gently, "let's put him aboard."

I tried to say that I thought the last drink must have been drugged, was conscious of a frightful wild beating of my heart, as of a caged bird struggling to escape; I felt a hand slide into the breast of my jacket, and knew no more.

I must have been senseless as a bale of goods for a long time; and must have slept naturally for many hours after the effects of the soporific drug had passed off; for I woke, rather than came to, feeling less wretched than may be supposed, and clear in mind. Yet not so clear as I thought; for I imagined myself to be lying in the open air upon a sidewalk; and for a long time neither the complete darkness nor the occasional strong lifting under me and falling away of the pavement seemed unaccountable. Nor did I realize for a long time that the hot, close air could not by any magic be related to the inspiring draft of a San Francisco street at night.

But at last it became evident to a jaded and illogical understanding that I was shut up somewhere, in an unventilated place that rose and fell quietly, as the breast rises and falls in deep breathing; and upon that realization came rapidly other evidences—smells of bilge-water, of calking and marine stores—that I was upon a ship at sea.

The adventure, then, had begun. The *Calliope* was southing; I had been put aboard in a senseless, drunken condition, and now Carrol and the others would be laughing at me to my face. I had wakened with the suspicion that Carrol himself had done the drugging, and that it was his hand that had slipped inside my jacket and relieved me of the crew-man's legacy. But I thought now that the drugging must be attributed to my own weak head, and the picking of my pocket to Carrol's natural wish to see the document in more responsible keeping. Yet my friends, too drunk themselves, perhaps, had not stowed me comfortably; or if they had laid me in a bunk, I had tumbled out of it. While I lay thus, desultorily ruminating, there opened suddenly, half a dozen feet above my head, a hatchway, and I saw bent over the brightly illumined square a yellow Chinaman, naked to the waist. I lay blinking at him.

For two seconds, perhaps, the Chinamen did not move a muscle. Then suddenly he whipped out a bright long knife from somewhere, caught it horizontally between his teeth and, before I could move hand or foot in self-defense, had dropped through the hatch and was kneeling heavily upon me. Yet murderously as he had come at me, he did not offer to strike. He seemed, indeed, relieved to find so unresisting an object to his prowess, and presently, lifting his face skyward, commenced to shout in a kind of shrill, high singsonging. Other yellow faces appeared soon in the hatchway, and the light was practically shut off by the massing.

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There was a great interchange of swift jabbery; and then the Chinamen that knelt upon me rose and motioned me to rise also. Seeing me to be scarce able to stand alone, yellow hands reached downward and helped me through the hatch. And I found myself in a kind of ship's forecastle, the center of a group of a dozen Chinamen, half naked and barefoot. I say a *kind* of forecastle, for though the place occupied the usual wedge-shaped space in the vessel's bows and was lined with tiers of bunks, it had about it a garish and Oriental look; for the curtains to the bunks were of showy, if coarse, embroidery; a big, brass, squatting god glowed between the butts in the bow, and the deck-beams and planking were one struggling mass of dragons; an inimitable composition, in Chinese-blue, scarlet and orange. Also there was an effect about the place of fluttering papers; and I learned afterward that these were prayers, mucilaged wherever piety could find a place for them. And for the rest, that forecastle smelt as no white man's forecastle smells; here was no odor of mildew and sour sweat, but a clean pungent odor, a hint of incense, or joss-sticks, perhaps, a hint of camphor and pepper.

From the forecastle I was helped to the ship's deck; and there, what with the brightness of the sun, the overpowering freshness of the sea air and the emptiness of my stomach, for all the world like a young lady whose stays are drawn too tight, I fainted dead away.

CHAPTER VII

BESSIE

I CAME to, lying upon a doubled quilt, in the shadow cast by the mainsail and faced so that I could see far off the purple hills of California sliding astern. The same Chinaman that had drawn the knife was sitting on his heels beside the quilt and offering me, in a blue and white bowl, a fluid mixture of water and soft boiled rice. How good it tasted! Or rather felt, for my insides burned like the pipes in a boiler. Nor could I take my lips from the bowl to ask where Carrol was until I had gulped the half of its contents.

"Callol," said the Chinaman, with an amused and tolerant smile, "no sabe Callol —Bessie come soon—him very fine talkee womans."

"Bessie?" I said idiotically. "What Bessie?"

"Him come now," said the Chinaman. He scrambled to his feet, and with a sudden nodding smile and open-hand gesture, indicated me to some one and, turning, went softly forward.

"Well of all the skinnies!" said a woman's voice, and I tried to rise. But was pushed down again by the shoulder.

"Take it easy," she said, and came around where I could see her and seated herself in a matter-of-fact way on the quilts at my feet.

She was no beauty (though young) and inclined to be overweight. But there was a certain comeliness about her, of coloring and of fine black eyes that twinkled amazingly. Her hair hung in two very thick but not very long braids, and was coarse but of a lovely brown color, with lighter streaks due to sunburn, and very shiny; her face was broadish, the features inclined to be thick; but she had an expression or well-being and joviality that were mighty pleasant to the eye. For costume she had a blue serge skirt spotted by sea-water, a kind of dressing-jacket of Chinese cut and material; and little else I fancy; certainly neither shoes nor stockings.

"I'm Bessie," she said, "that's all. Who are you?"

"My name is Parrish," I said, "and I'm part owner of the *Calliope.*"

"What's that?" said Bessie.

"Why," said I, "isn't this the *Calliope?*"

"This?" she exclaimed. "This schooner? Not on your life. This jolly boat is the *Shantung.* And your hall-marks say 'stowaway' plain as day. And the *Shantung* company would like to know how you came to be in the forward storeroom?"

"As to that," I said, though very much bewildered, "I was put. Are there no white men on this ship?"

"Not a one but you," said she.

"Then," said I, "I was drugged and robbed and shunted off where I could do no harm and tell no tales." Indignation rose and I found the strength to sit up; and I plunged into my bad-luck story at a speed that produced upon Bessie a look of complete bewilderment.

She interrupted good-naturedly.

"I'll tell you," she said, "just where you are. And you can dope out how you got here. The *Shantung* belongs to those who work her—just thirteen of 'em, and she

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sailed yesterday morning in hardware for Peru to trade in miscellanies. Now what's that to you?"

"Yesterday morning!" I cried. "Have I been in that hole all that time? No wonder I'm done up."

"It's wonderful it didn't kill you," said she.

"As," said I, "it was probably meant to." And again I began my story, but with more clarity and less speed. And, though intending to reserve the parts that concerned the lost galleon, I had soon told Bessie the whole of it.

"But," she said, when I had done, "if there was all that treasure, and you told them where it was, why wouldn't they take you along and let you share?"

"That's what I don't get," said I. "There seems to be millions of treasure, and there were only five of us; and it was I that found out where the stuff was."

"Well," said Bessie, "some men are so mean you can't understand it at all."

"I wouldn't wonder," I said, "if it wasn't so much meanness as just plain thinking I'd all the time be in the way. And I dare say that's right. You see I'm not up to much hard work, and I'm not very practical."

"And I don't see why they put you on board the *Shantung*. It was a dead easy thing to do, because we all were ashore at a wedding in Chinatown, and perhaps that's the reason. It would have been a cinch to knock you on the head and stuff you into a manhole, or to just drop you overboard and whack you once with an oar."

"They were all pretty drunk," I said; "at least I think so, and maybe they didn't quite know what to do with me; and maybe they thought they were perpetrating a joke." I smiled dismally, but Bessie shook her head.

"They hoped you'd smother yourself in the storeroom," she said. "Don't see why you didn't; and they thought maybe your death would be fixed on us. And that's *one* for your fat Carrol. But say, what about this treasure? That all sounds like gibberish."

I had to go pretty deeply into early Spanish explorations and the conquest of Peru before she understood; and then she said:

"Well, if your address was *bona fide*, you've played in dirty hard luck to lose it. But I don't see what you can do about it."

"Oh," said I, "the paper itself doesn't matter, Miss Bessie."

"Guess you'd better say *Mrs.* Bessie," said she.

"Beg pardon," I said, "I will. I've got the paper pretty well by heart. Indeed, I don't do anything well except remember things."

"You remember the bearings?" she asked, and I repeated them for her.

"About where is that on the map?" she said.

"Why," said I, "I didn't look at it, but it's not far from the Straits of Magellan; maybe in the Straits themselves, but south of them, I think; off Terra del Fuego, I think."

"Do you believe in it?" she asked. "In the treasure, I mean?"

"Mrs. Bessie," I said, "the crew-man believed in it; his murderers believed in it; Carrol and his gang believe in it; and, as I feel like a played out dish-rag, there's not much to prevent *me* believing in it."

She thought a while.

"Nor me," she said finally, and looked landward for some moments, frowning thoughtfully and pursing her lips. Presently her brow smoothed and she turned once more to me.

"If you," said she, "were willing to go shares, share and share alike, I might get the company to take the matter up. If we make a good dicker in Peru, and are feeling pretty flush, it might just appeal to the company to take a chance, and again it might not."

"You mean the Shantung Co?" I asked. "This ship, in other words?"

"Yes," she said, "and the kid, and me."

"Do you belong to the company," I asked.

"Why, yes, I do," she said.

"And the kid?" I asked.

"That's Lichee," said she, and she smiled at the thought of him. "He's not awake yet, the lazy little beggar. But when he *is* awake Mr.—*Parrish*, didn't you say?—he'll be good company for you." She leaned toward me confidentially. "He's a child, too!" And then for the first time I heard her laugh. It was not the ha-ha-ha of civilization, but the great haw-haw-haw chest tones of the African savage—a laugh at once strong music and the epitome of humor. The tears of laughter rolled from her eyes; and I caught a glimpse of more than one Chinaman looking suddenly up from his work and smiling broadly toward the burst of merriment.

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After a while she stopped laughing and rose to her feet.

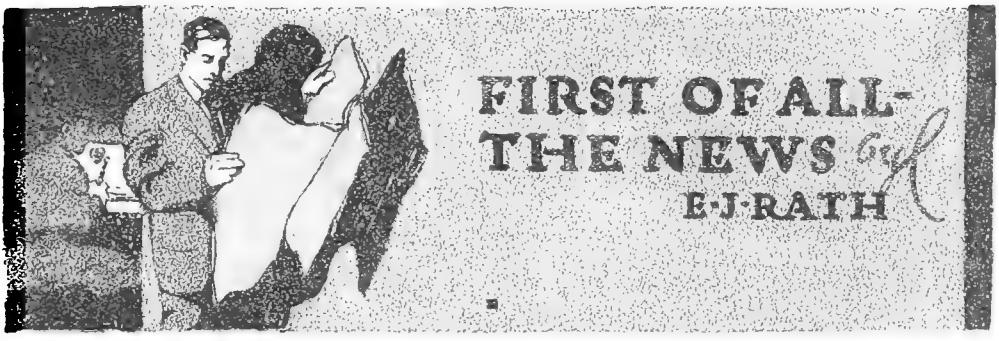
"Now for business," she said. "Do I lay the matter before the company—or don't I? It's your secret."

"No," said I, "it became yours, too, when you laughed like that."

"Good!" she said, and flushed up redly under her clear tan. "But you won't find them coming to any decision right off. There's no man in this world so quick to decide as a Chinaman if he's only got a second to make up his mind; and there's no man so slow, if he's got weeks and weeks. Anyhow," she went on, "you'll be parlor-boarder; and I'm hanged if we don't put a little flesh on your bones. There isn't a better trainer in God's world than I am. I had a husband," she said, with a sudden twitching of the eyelids, "who was a crank on health— Sleep," she said, "is the most important thing; so roll over, and when you wake up I'll see that you do the next most important thing next."

And I rolled over as I had been commanded, and fell upon the instant into a quiet deep-sea sleep.

TO BE CONTINUED



CRAWFORD swung his chair as the desk telephone rang, lifted the receiver and said, "Well?" Then, "Yes, this is Crawford; go ahead. Oh, it's you— What? Not repeat your name? All right; but there's nobody here, anyhow. Yes, I hear you all right."

After that he listened for a couple of minutes, nodding his head toward the receiver and groping for a bit of paper.

"Much obliged, old man," he said finally. "It's a big story."

He hung up, tilted his swivel chair back and sat staring into the pigeon-holes of his desk, his eyes squinting. Then he arose, wearily, and went over to the corner window, where he stood for a short time, gazing in a preoccupied way at the office buildings which bounded the horizon. Crawford was tall and lean and middle-aged, with the remnants of a shock of iron-gray hair. When the panorama ceased to interest him he wheeled jerkily, glanced at the clock on the wall and murmured, "Saturday—hum!" A boy answered the touch of a push-button.

"Ask Mr. Williams to come in," he said.

As Williams, the city editor, entered, Crawford was rolling in his hands a set of dog-eared blue-prints that had been spread on his desk.

"Still building the house, Crawford?" asked Williams, with a faint smile. Crawford's house had been long building and the office found amusement in it.

"Building the house?" repeated Crawford mechanically, looking into the pile of papers where the plans had been thrown. "Yes, of course; still building it." He turned a curious glance at Williams, then nodded to a chair.

"Sit down, Billy; here's a story," he said. "Old man Perkins' bank has been robbed."

Williams nodded and waited.

"And we're the only people who know it," Crawford went on. "It's Saturday and the bank's closed now. But you'll have to get it somehow."

Williams nodded again and waited for his chief to continue.

"It's big, Billy," said Crawford slowly.

"How big?"

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"Upward of a million and a half."

The city editor pursed his lips for a whistle, but remained silent.

"It will bust the bank," added Crawford. "Bust it wide open."

"Sure," assented Williams. "It would smash almost any bank in town just now.

"Who did it?"

"Perkins."

"Ow!" said the city editor. "Some things are beginning to be explained."

"Yes. Now, listen, Billy," said Crawford carefully. "In order to land this without giving it to anybody else you'll have to work very carefully. Not over three or four directors know it yet—and only two clerks."

"Banking department notified?"

"No."

"District Attorney?"

"Not yet. That makes it harder to get, of course, but more likely to be a beat if you do get it. You've got to confirm it, although I know it's true. But don't send to anybody except those who already know it. Send straight to Perkins, if he can be found, and put it up to him—good and hard. Then see these directors." Crawford wrote the names on a slip of paper. "I don't know who the clerks are, so you'd better not send to any of the bank employees. Let your men assume that this is an established fact and work on that basis."

"How did Perkins work it?" asked Williams. "Did you get that?"

"The usual way. As president he had access to anything in the shop. He's been taking out securities and gambling with them. Nothing original about it; in fact, the whole thing appears to have been very stupid and crude. He was bound to be nailed. You know something about what he's been doing in the market. This is the cause or the effect, whichever you like. Two clerks who were checking over some securities a couple of days ago got on to it, I understand. They didn't say anything to the president about it; I guess they understood how the land lay. One of them went to a director—the man who got him the job in the bank. His name's on that paper—McLachlan. McLachlan told three other directors. They put it up to Perkins and he owned up, first crack out of the box."

"And haven't they notified the board?"

"Not yet, I'm told," said Crawford.

"That's funny."

"It is queer," confirmed Crawford. "But maybe we'll be able to guess why."

"Well, it comes at a lucky time," said Williams, rising. "I've got three or four men waiting for assignments. We've got eight or ten hours to work it in. You're dead sure about the tip?"

"Absolutely. But I can't tell you where I got it, Billy."

"Rather not know," answered Williams, as he reached the door. "Will you be down to-night?"

"Yes, I'll be back," answered Crawford.

He sat leaning forward against the edge of his desk for several minutes after the city editor left, making meaningless pencil-marks on a pad. Pretty soon he went to the telephone again and asked for a number.

"Mrs. Crawford there, Jennie?" he asked.

A pause, and then: "Oh, hello, Nell. Say; I've got to stay down to-night. There won't be time for me to get home for dinner and back. Can't you come down to the old place and join me? Then I can send you off home and get back to the shop. Yes; I want you to come. Something to tell you. A surprise? Yes; it's like that, Nell. You'll come, won't you? Fine. About six o'clock. Sure. By-bye, Nell."

Crawford reached for his pipe, tipped his chair back and noted that he had two hours to wait for dinner.

"It's a big story, all right," he said aloud. "A corker. I only hope we can keep it sewed up."

Williams poked his head into the office of the managing editor several times during the early evening, but it was after nine o'clock when he found Crawford, his feet outstretched on a second chair, peacefully smoking a big cigar.

"Began to think you weren't coming," said Williams.

"I am a little late. Mrs. Crawford had dinner with me down-town, you know. We got to talking and the first thing I knew it was nearly nine. Ever go to Rudini's any more, Billy?"

"Yes; sure," said Williams hastily. "Now, about——"

"We get there once in a while ourselves," interrupted Crawford. "Know why I like it? It's such a good place to talk things over. Ever get that feeling about a place? Whenever we want to have

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a general debate or make speeches to each other we drift down to Rudini's. Whenever I say Rudini's to Mrs. Crawford she knows I've got something on my mind that wants words put to it, and when she says Rudini's to me I know it's the other way about."

"So I suppose you talked house," Williams broke in, anxious to close the topic.

"Sure thing, we talked about that," said Crawford, eyeing Williams placidly. "In fact, we decided not to build just yet."

Williams looked his surprise. "I thought you began next month," he said.

"You never start until you begin to dig the cellar," observed Crawford. "You never——"

He swung his feet off the second chair suddenly, leaned forward and slapped his hand on the desk with a bang.

"Is your wife a regular, all-around brick, Williams?" he demanded shortly.

Williams smiled and nodded. He knew his chief had peculiar moods.

"So's mine, Billy!" said Crawford. "So's mine. Now, how about that story?"

"Got it," said Williams briskly. "Phillips has just come in. He saw Perkins."

"Let's talk to Phillips," said Crawford, ringing his bell.

Phillips entered a moment later.

"Sit down," said Crawford. "I hear you've seen Perkins."

"Yes," nodded Phillips. "I found him."

"Where?"

"Home."

"Not running, eh?"

"Not a bit. At least, he swears he won't. Although you didn't instruct me to, I took McIntyre along with me," added Phillips, looking at his city editor. "He hadn't been able to find his director and I thought if the old man did say anything it was better to have a witness, so there couldn't be any come-back."

"That's right," nodded Williams.

"Perkins admitted the whole business," continued Phillips.

"Didn't even make a bluff?" asked Crawford.

"No; not a bluff. In fact, I might almost say he introduced the subject, as soon as he found out who we were."

Crawford shook his head in amazement.

"I wasn't surprised at that, after I talked with him awhile," said Phillips. "He's morally obtuse. I never saw anything quite like it. He knows he's broken the law and he knows he's liable to go to jail, yet he doesn't seem to think there's anything wrong about it. He says he'll settle up all right. He says he'll return all the securities and the bank won't lose a dollar. Somehow or other he has made himself believe that, although the law can put him in jail, he'll never go there."

"Doesn't he know he's busted his bank?" demanded Crawford.

"He says it will be embarrassed," answered Phillips. "That's the way he puts it—embarrassed. He thinks it'll stay shut for awhile. The trouble with him, Mr. Crawford, is that he's too old to realize what he's done."

"I guess it's something like that," said Crawford. "Perkins has bossed that bank so long that he's come to believe he owns every dollar in it. Sometimes other people's money looks like your own, if you handle it too much. Did he say what he did with it?"

"Stocks," said Phillips. "He told us all about his investments, as if he was justifying himself. You'd have thought he was making a statement to the banking department, the way he went into details. McIntyre just sat and wrote it down and the old man waited for him now and then to be sure he'd get it all. He told everything. It knocked anything I ever heard—I mean the way he spouted it."

"Well, you've got the story all right, Williams," observed Crawford. "I didn't think it would be so easy."

"Have Jackson and Rand come in yet?" asked Williams, turning to Phillips.

"They hadn't a few minutes ago."

"I sent them out chasing directors," explained Williams. "You start your story, anyhow, Phillips."

As Phillips went out Williams turned to his chief.

"It's extraordinary," he exclaimed. "That was so easy I'm afraid it won't stay exclusive."

"I think it will," said Crawford optimistically, "unless those directors get to talking. And, if the whole board doesn't know it yet, there must be some reason for not talking."

It was eleven o'clock when Williams appeared again in the office of the managing editor. Crawford glanced up from a proof.

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"This Perkins stuff is the most extraordinary interview I ever read," he said. "Obtuse! Why, he talks as if he had done the bank a favor."

"Rand and Jackson are in."

"Land anything?"

"Three bank directors at their heels," grinned the city editor.

"Oh, I expected visitors," said Crawford, yawning.

"You're the man they're after."

"I suppose so. But first, what did Rand and Jackson get?"

"Denials—the flattest kind. Each denial just like the other. I'm glad we landed Perkins."

Crawford smiled as he rang for a boy.

"Show in the three gentlemen who are waiting," he said. "You stay, Williams. You may as well do penance, too. And, boy—ask Mr. Rand and Mr. Jackson to come in, also."

Three grave-looking men filed into the office of the managing editor.

"Good evening, Mr. Huntington," said Crawford, rising. "We met once, I believe."

Mr. Huntington remembered, and then introduced Mr. Brett and Mr. O'Donnell.

"This is Mr. Williams, city editor," said Crawford. "I asked him to remain because he has something to do with this matter." Then, as Rand and Jackson appeared, the former smiling grimly: "I have also asked these gentlemen to come in. They've seen you already, I believe."

Mr. Huntington nodded shortly. The directors took chairs, and Mr. Brett and Mr. O'Donnell looked at Mr. Huntington. He cleared his throat nervously.

"In some way your paper, Mr. Crawford," he began, "has got hold of a most extraordinary yarn concerning the Henry Street Bank, and we understand that you actually propose to publish it. Of course, you don't desire to publish anything which is not true?"

"We don't dare to," emphasized Crawford, nodding his head emphatically. "No paper could take such a chance, particularly with a financial institution."

"I felt sure of it, sir," continued the spokesman of the directors. "For that reason we have called to assure your paper that there is not a grain of truth in the story which has reached you."

"Not a grain?" repeated Crawford, looking from one director to another.

"Not a particle," replied Mr. Huntington, slapping his knee. Mr. Brett and Mr. O'Donnell nodded in affirmation.

"You are quite sure you know what the story is?" asked Crawford mildly.

"These gentleman told us," said Huntington, nodding at Jackson and Rand, who stood in the background. "It is absolutely false, from start to finish. It has no basis. I know of nothing that could have suggested it. Such being the case, of course it is needless for us to say more."

"Well, now, maybe Mr. Rand and Mr. Jackson didn't get it quite right," said Crawford, with a glance at Williams. Mr. Huntington looked puzzled.

"I'll tell you the way I got it," continued Crawford evenly. "We do not propose, of course, to print anything libelous, and I'll admit that it does sound extraordinary. But just to show you what queer stories get started sometimes about banks I'll give you an outline of this one. It begins on September 14 last, when Mr. Perkins, your president, went into the vaults after banking hours—about 4:30 in the afternoon, to be exact—and took therefrom securities to the value of $645,000. These were bonds of the Western and Eastern Railway, the Connecting Waterway and Terminal and the Little Divide Electric. These bonds he used as collateral on September 15, in pursuance of certain market operations in which he was then engaged. On September 27 Mr. Perkins paid another visit to the vaults and on that occasion removed certain other bonds, Government Fours, valued at about $380,000. These he sold outright. A short time later, the condition of the market not being favorable to his enterprises, he revisited the vault. This was on October 8. This time——"

Mr. Huntington held up his hand.

"I don't think it is necessary for you to go any further with this story, Mr. Crawford," he said.

"You mean that it's true," said the managing editor quietly.

"You must understand," said the director, flushing, "that our first statement was made wholly in the interests of the bank and was, therefore, justified. We are here to protect the bank."

"Surely," said Crawford. "That part of it is all right. I understand all about that."

"May I ask where you got this infor-

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mation?" asked Huntington. "It—er—seems to go into considerable detail."

"As a rule, we do not disclose sources of information," answered Crawford. "Yet, as we shall in all probability print the source of this particular information, I do not mind telling it to you now. It comes from Mr. Perkins."

Huntington exchanged doubting glances with his fellow directors.

"Nobody else," said Crawford shortly, as he noted the exchange.

For a moment none spoke. Then it was Mr. Huntington who said, deliberately:

"You undoubtedly have a full statement of it. We can not deny that. It would be useless. But I shall nevertheless show you, Mr. Crawford, that the story can not be published. The fact that it is true gives weight to our position. I do not presume that you wish to destroy a bank, do you?"

"God forbid!" said Crawford earnestly.

"You would not care to be in the position of bringing loss and, in many cases, ruin to several thousand depositors?"

Crawford glanced over Huntington's head and caught a glimpse of Rand, who was staring at him curiously.

"Certainly not," he replied softly.

"As a public institution your newspaper could not afford——" began Mr. Huntington.

"One minute," interrupted Crawford. "The sum stolen is $1,675,000, is it not?"

"About correct," nodded Huntington.

"And you can't recover the securities; at least, not soon?"

"We fear not."

"Is the Henry Street Bank big enough to pocket that loss, then?"

"No; frankly, it isn't."

"Particularly in the present state of things financially?" pursued the managing editor. He was leaning forward now, emphasizing his argument with taps of his knuckles on the desk.

"That is true," assented Huntington.

"You gentlemen, for instance," continued Crawford, "couldn't raise that amount of cash to-morrow, or within a week, say?"

The directors shook their heads.

"And Perkins is cleaned out and couldn't raise a cent, either, could he?"

"Hasn't a damn cent left," muttered Brett savagely.

"That being the case," said Crawford, "it seems to me that your bank is going to smash, anyhow."

Mr. Huntington moistened his lips.

"The situation is like this," he said slowly. "The matter having as yet taken no formal shape——"

"Is the bank ruined or not?" demanded Crawford impatiently.

"It will be when this matter becomes public," answered Huntington almost defiantly.

"Well, it's going to become public, isn't it?"

Huntington paused for a moment. "Yes, I believe it is bound to become public," he admitted. "But not necessarily to-morrow. Not necessarily next day, or even the next."

His eyes met those of the managing editor.

"If not immediately, when?" asked Crawford.

"Well—perhaps not before Wednesday," said Mr. Huntington tentatively.

"And why not?"

"Because, Mr. Crawford, it is, save to a very few persons, quite unknown as yet. Even our full board does not know it. The public does not know. The criminal authorities do not know it. The banking department hasn't been notified. And there are good banking reasons, sir, why this should not become public just now—that is, for a few days."

"Not that you can save the bank?" suggested Crawford.

"No; I won't say that."

"Then what difference does it make whether we print it to-morrow or print it three or four days from now?"

"The thing is so irregular," blurted Mr. Brett. "Why, man, the bank examiner doesn't know it!"

"Have you sent for him?" inquired Crawford, turning his eyes in the direction of the new speaker.

"No, we haven't," broke in Huntington.

"Don't you propose to?"

"Of course, that will be necessary. But you understand it is largely a formality, Mr. Crawford, and we have not yet had opportunity to hold a directors' meeting."

"And when will that meeting be?" asked Crawford curiously.

"Well, you see, this is Saturday night. To-morrow is Sunday. We can not do anything effective on Sunday. There's little use to call a meeting before Monday. And you can understand how grossly irregular

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it would be, Mr. Crawford, to have a matter of this kind in the newspapers before even the board of directors knew of it."

"We're not interested in the matter of irregularity," said Crawford impatiently. "The point is, will the bank smash anyhow? You admit that it will. So why not let it smash immediately?"

"Remember the depositors," observed Mr. Huntington gravely.

Crawford nodded. "They must, of course, be considered. What do you plan to do for them?"

"We shall endeavor to see that the bank pays them every dollar," declared the spokesman.

"When it liquidates?"

"Certainly—I meant that."

"Then will the depositors be any better off if the bank doesn't close until Wednesday, rather than on Monday?"

Mr. Huntington shook his head impatiently.

"We do not want to start several thousand people into a panic by a premature announcement," he ventured.

"But for the life of me I can not see what good this proposed delay will do your depositors," said Crawford. "Honestly, I can't. If they don't get their money out before the bank shuts, what difference does Monday or Wednesday make to them?"

"You are not a banker, Mr. Crawford," spoke Huntington, "and we can not expect you to understand all the banking reasons which enter into a matter of this kind. Believe me when I tell you that we are acting now solely in the interest of the depositors of our bank. The wreck of a financial institution is an awful thing. Fortunately, in this case, we have a brief warning and a little time in which to prepare."

"Prepare what?" said Crawford sharply. "You've admitted you can't raise a cent to stop this thing."

Mr. Huntington went on without heeding the interruption: "As a public institution we are entitled to the sympathy and support of other public institutions. Rather than tear us down, they should seek to hold up our hands. As a public institution, your newspaper——"

"Wait a minute," said Crawford. "Who told you this newspaper was a public institution?"

"Isn't it?" asked Huntington.

"It is not," replied Crawford. "And I do not call to mind a single newspaper in this town, or in this State, that is a public institution. It is a private institution. So is your bank. Both of them depend upon the public for their support; both of them owe something to the public. But they're private institutions just the same. This newspaper's chief asset is its circulation. That circulation depends on the good will of our readers. The good will of those readers depends on whether we sell them the right kind of goods. The goods in our case is news. We deal in it; we buy it and sell it. The paper that sells the best quality and largest amount of news gets readers, gets advertising and makes money. It is our business to keep faith with those readers. Giving them the news—all the news we can get—is our part of the contract.

"This affair of your bank is news—big news! It's true. You confirm it. Your president confesses it. It can't be hidden. We've got no business to hide it. Our readers are entitled to it. It's a business proposition, Mr. Huntington.

"You ask us to keep this story out. You ask us not to sell something which we have in stock and which we have a perfect right to sell. We haven't stolen it. We got it in a legitimate way. It is ours to dispose of. Now, I'll admit this: If you could show me that the Henry Street Bank might be saved by killing or suspending publication of this story, I'd do it. But you haven't given a reason. You admit you can't save it. You admit that things must happen as they are cast, but instead of wanting them to happen to-morrow you ask us to wait for a few days. Why? Who does it help? Shall we wait until every other newspaper in town gets this story? Will that do your depositors any good?"

"But have you considered, Mr. Crawford," said Huntington, as the managing editor paused, "that you may be doing your paper an injury by thus precipitating a bank failure! Think of those of your readers—hundreds, perhaps thousands of them—who may be depositors in the bank."

"They've got to know it some time," answered Crawford quietly.

"True. But this crisis is too grave to be handled to suit the expediency of a single newspaper."

Crawford shook his head. "You haven't got any good reason for stopping this story, Mr. Huntington—nor have I. It goes."

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"Once more, Mr. Crawford," said Huntington earnestly, "we beg you to delay this publication. We can assure you that it will reach no other newspaper in the meantime. Will you hold it until Tuesday?"

Crawford's head shook again, slowly but positively. There was half a minute's silence in the room. The directors of the Henry Street Bank looked at one another uncertainly. Williams was restless to get the story in shape, knowing now that nothing could stop it. Jackson began to edge toward the door—he had nearly a column to write. Rand, standing back of Williams' chair, was leaning forward, his lips parted, regarding Crawford with steady, unwinking eyes.

"Then we are to understand," Huntington broke the silence gratingly, "that this article will be printed in your paper tomorrow?"

"It will be printed," said the editor softly.

The three directors arose. As the triumvirate moved toward the door, Crawford stirred quickly in his chair.

"Oh, Mr. Huntington!" he called, and waited.

The spokesman of the directors paused, his eye kindling with hope.

"You're the president of the Bonanza Lumber Company, aren't you?"

Huntington nodded and waited.

"Mr. Brett and Mr. O'Donnell are two of your directors, I think. Is that correct?"

"Yes. Why?"

"I was only wondering if the Bonanza Company had a deposit in the Henry Street Bank," said Crawford musingly.

Huntington stared at him for a second, his lip curling. Then he left the room, with Brett and O'Donnell in his wake.

A smile spread itself slowly over Williams' face. "So that was the reason!" he exclaimed. "They wanted the bank open on Monday, did they?"

"Run the story in the last edition only, Billy," said Crawford briskly. "No use in giving it to the other papers. If there's any more of it in proof yet, ask the boy to rush it in, please."

Crawford was talking over the 'phone at two-thirty o'clock in the morning as Williams rushed into his room with a couple of ink-damp papers in his hand. He glanced up, but went on evenly:

"Yes, I understand, Nell. I'll be starting home in a few minutes now. The paper's just out. Oh, yes; the story's in it. What? Of course I'm glad—if you are. Yes, Nell; yes—yes. Good-by, and—God bless you!"

"Here she is!" cried Williams exultantly, slapping down a paper.

"Hold on. You'll get these plans all dirty," rebuked Crawford, carefully lifting the offending sheet. His blue-prints were spread across the desk. Slowly he rolled them up and slipped an elastic band around each end.

"I saw all the proofs, Billy," he said. "It's a good story—well handled. That's a bully head. You wrote it, I suppose?"

Williams laughed.

"You care more about your blue-print house than you do about the biggest beat we've landed in five years, I actually believe!" he said gaily.

"No-o; I wouldn't admit that," observed Crawford judicially. "But I do care a lot about the house, just the same."

"Not a line of this story in any of the other early editions," continued Williams, bubbling with pride. "Oh, it's a great story, Crawford! Give us more of 'em." He rushed out again, whistling with great cheerfulness.

The managing editor was slipping into his overcoat when a figure appeared again on the threshold of his room. It was Williams. He stood hesitatingly for a few seconds, staring wild-eyed at the loose-jointed, gray-haired man in front of him. Then he stepped forward quickly and placed both hands on Crawford's shoulders.

"Old man," he said, his voice shaking. "Rand has told me."

"Did Rand know it?" asked Crawford simply.

"He knew it all the time—all during that session in here. God! I never dreamed it. Is—is all your money in that bank, Crawford?"

Smiling faintly, Crawford nodded.

"Mine—and hers," he said.

Williams swallowed something and looked into his chief's eyes. Then his hands slipped down until they gripped those of the tired-looking man in front of him.

"Crawford," he muttered in a queerly uncertain voice, "you're the finest newspaper man I ever knew!"

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SERGEANT McCARTY AND THE BLACK HAND RED

by

P·C·Macfarlane

ACCOMPANIED by his two most trusted patrolmen, Dugan and Meyer, Sergeant McCarty responded to the summons of Chief Brandt.

"It's that kidnapping case," the Chief said abruptly. "That Italian woman was in here this morning again. Her cheeks are washed pasty-white with crying, and when she's not talking her lips are quivering fit to break your heart, and hang it, McCarty, you've got to go on the case; that's all there is to it."

It was a plea rather than an order, this of the Chief's. He continued:

"Hodson's been on it a week and he don't get anywhere."—Hodson was Captain of Detectives, and McCarty's personal enemy. —"She's only a Dago woman, but she comes here every morning, and this time she

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shows me a letter that came to-day, and a lock of the boy's hair."

Sergeant McCarty took them in his hand —a letter with a few hasty foreign words scrawled upon it in an outlandish hand, and a long lock of dark brown hair. The Sergeant lifted the lock tenderly and it curled in ringlet fashion about his stout finger.

"Next time it'll be a piece of his ear they'll send, or a finger," said the Chief. "They got an idea her husband's rich. They want ten thousand or they'll kill the boy. He told me with sobs he couldn't scrape up three."

Sergeant McCarty stood thoughtfully, fondling the curling brown ringlet.

A deep look had come into the eyes of Officer Dugan, who loved McCarty well— a troubled look of fear and awe.

"They're turrible, they say, them Black Handers," he half whispered. "Turrible! If you get one of 'em the others'll follow you half round the world to get you. They're hideous cruel in their killin', too."

"They're vindictive, all right," assented the Chief in the low and solemn tone that alone seemed fitting to the occasion. "It's a hard game, but I couldn't stand the mother's tears. Tom Hodson won't never get into the danger zone, so I put it up to a man—up to you, McCarty. Mind you, I don't order you. I just put it up to you— as a father yourself, and for the honor of the Department."

The Chief was looking straight into McCarty's eyes. So were Dugan and Meyer. McCarty was looking straight into himself at the time, considering what it meant to undertake a campaign against these black-featured, swart-souled butchers of the night, whose secret spies were everywhere, whose vengeance would not go unsated though a score of lives lay between them and its object. They fought with cunning, cruel weapons that opened the veins of children and broke the hearts of mothers and made the blood of men run cold. The Black Hand reddens with the blood of its victims. Six months before, McCarty himself came upon Officer Wilton face up in an alley on the North Beach. A thin, black-handled stilletto was sticking straight through an eye into the brain. Wilton's offense was that he had seen too much. So the dagger blinded the eye that saw and passed on and darkened the mind that held the memory-picture.

"A man ain't got a fair show for his life, goin' against them," volunteered Meyer respectfully.

Sergeant McCarty, stronger than a bull, keener than a falcon, strode over to the window and looked out. The street, the busy, rattling, banging, clanging street, was just in front of him, but he was not seeing it. In his mind's eye was the picture of his own home, with children and a wife in it. He saw, too, images of other things—of a tall, dark man with earrings, who enticed a curly-haired, dark-eyed child around a corner and made off with him; memory-pictures came, too, of tight places he had been in during his career; hand to hand fights, when a blow, a shot, or the ripping stroke of a knife might have ended his life; times when he stood eye to eye with death; when the trembling of a finger, the weakening of a single nerve, or the swift comprehension of a single instant had stood between him and destruction. Always before he had come through. He thought of the Italian mother, heart-broken, the pale face, the trembling lips and the great dark eyes, luminous with grief and anxiety. And now rose before him a vision of the midnight trail, the slender threads and clues that led through devious channels in the darkness to close and dangerous quarters where every shade was a murderous shape and each uncertain turn was pregnant with peril.

"It's hard when children are not safe in the streets. By God, it is!" commented Brandt.

Sergeant McCarty turned. He was holding up the thick finger about which the ringlet of silky brown had twined itself. It grew warm about his finger and seemed to clasp it with the embrace of a living thing.

"I'll go, Chief," he said simply. "I'll put the boy in his mother's arms and I'll be like to get the gang, every one, so there'll be none to stab me in the eyes or smother me in mortar or such-like Dago tricks. I'll do it—on one condition."

"And that is?"

"That I work alone," answered the Sergeant, his fine outstanding figure, solid shouldered, heavy headed, looking a trifle more solidly unyielding than usual.

A look of surprise came into the face of the Chief, while reproachful glances popped from the eyes of Dugan and Meyer.

"Alone!" exclaimed all three in one voice.

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"Yes," said the Sergeant, lowering his eyes gravely.

Like a flash the men understood. One would be enough if the luck was right. If it were wrong, one more widow in the pension fund were better than three.

Chief Brandt was usually a stickler for military conventions, yet here he had talked with a Sergeant and two patrolmen as if they were brothers. To him this seemed an unofficial case.

"I believe you'll win, McCarty," he said, and shook hands with him silently. More, he even left a pudgy, pulseless hand for an instant in Dugan's and Meyer's palms.

Then all three men went out.

"Let 'em alone, Sergeant," counseled Meyer, as they walked down the hall. "They'll cut you to ribbons."

"They'll throw vitriol in your eyes or tie you up for the rats to eat you alive," added Dugan dolefully.

It was some sixty paces down the hall to his own desk. The Sergeant walked them silently, with no change of feature except that the blue eyes almost closed as he reached the end of his journey. The mind's eye was seeing. The shrewd McCarty brain was visualizing a plan of campaign. By the time he reached his desk, his eyes were back to normal. If anything, the whites showed a trifle. Perhaps his face was paler than usual. Certainly his jaw was set. From his desk he took up a couple of papers and passed them to Dugan.

"Dugan," he asked, "pay these two tax bills for me to-day, will you?" and handed him the money.

Dugan accepted the commission gravely.

For a moment the Sergeant sorted the papers in a drawer till he came upon the baptismal certificate of his youngest born, which had slumbered in the desk for the two or three years since Father O'Malley handed it to him one day in the street. He wrote his wife's name and his house address upon the envelope and, stamping it, handed it to Meyer.

"Drop it in the box for me," he said.

Then he left the station.

People had a childish faith in rough and ready McCarty. He was swift and fearless. He knew every cobble in San Francisco. Blindfold him and spill him out anywhere in the confines of the city and he'd tell where he was by the smell of the sewer-gas or the gutters, and chart his compass by the feel of the first trolley-pole he got his hand upon.

As the Sergeant's feet touched the pavement, and the air of Market Street swept up into his nostrils, all the solemnity of his feelings vanished. His old spirit came back to him, the spirit of dauntless bravery, of keen, eager, indomitableness and that strange mingling of Irish humor and canny Celtic caution that characterized all his work. Sergeant McCarty never slept on the trail. He moved rapidly. He had theories about many things. A time or two Sergeant McCarty had amazed the people of his city and his comrades upon the force as well as the criminal world by turning and with sure intuition clapping his hand upon a thief or a murderer, just because his knowledge of people, circumstances and conditions pointed unerringly to the only person who could have been guilty.

And no man had yet proven McCarty wrong. Only they said, "Some day this man McCarty will butt his way to a slab in the morgue, and then what good is he?"

"I'd as lief go to the morgue gettin' that Dago's kid back, body whole, to his mother, as any job I know," reflected the Sergeant to himself.

While his mind was thumbing thoughts and constructing tentative theories, his eyes scanned the letter as he walked.

Sergeant McCarty knew that every crime leaves a trail. The more ignorant the criminal, the broader that trail is likely to be, since resources are more limited and imagination is less active. But McCarty had found no trail. He had only the lock of hair, the letter and the envelope. The letter was a plain bit of note-paper, torn from an ordinary cheap tablet. It told no story. It gave no hint. It was as like every other cheap envelope as could be. He studied the hand-writing, fixing in his brain its least peculiarity. Where had that letter been posted—from what particular mail-box in the great city? The postmark read: "Oct. 24th, 6:00 P.M. Sta. K." That was indefinite enough, but here at least was a starting point, and even a fine, narrow entering wedge of suggestion. Station K was a well known department store in the very center of the city. The Sergeant went there, straight.

"Got any writing paper like this?" he asked, exhibiting the back of the sheet to a saleslady.

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"Heaps of it," she answered, pointing to a pyramid of the cheap tablets behind her.

"Sell any yesterday?"

"Of course."

"To an Italian?"

"I presume so—to all kinds of people."

"Do you remember selling any to a Dago?"

"I don't remember particularly."

"Think hard."

"I do not remember, I told you," answered the young lady, looking McCarty straight in the eye with the independence of one who possessed a good conscience toward her employers and the Police Department.

"Where would a man go to write a letter if he was going to mail it here?" the Sergeant asked, knowing well when to waste no more words.

"Men's writing-room, third floor."

McCarty found it speedily. The mail-box attracted his attention.

"How often is this emptied?" he asked of the liveried attendant.

"Every hour."

"A letter post-marked 6:00 P. M. would have been dropped here between five and six?"

"Yes."

"In and out of this room all the time, are you?"

"Yes, sir."

"Notice anybody particular writing in here late yesterday—foreigner-like, say, an Italian, maybe?"

The man thought a moment. A light of recollection broke upon his face.

"Why, why yes. There was a Dago lookin' fellow in here—sure. Sharp features, nose like an eagle's beak. Eyes black as coal, heavy black moustache, but white skin, like he might be a barber or a laundry worker."

"How did you happen to notice him particularly?"

"Well, I guess because he brought his own little pad and wrote in it, just one sheet, and chucked the rest in the waste-basket, like he didn't want to use the house paper. Most everybody who comes here is likely to graft on the house stationery. We're always watchin' to see they don't stuff a lot of it in their pockets. That's how I noticed him."

"Ever see him before?"

"No."

"Or since?"

"No. Yes! By jing, I did! About half an hour after the store closed. He was talkin' to one of them Eyetalians at the boot-black stand over on Ellis."

Three minutes later Sergeant McCarty's shoes were being polished at that same place by old Serralunga whom McCarty had known well for twenty years. Beside him worked his two sons. There were half a dozen chairs in the stall, and four operators. It was the fourth who engaged McCarty's particular attention, a puffy-faced, undersized fellow.

"Who's the new one?" quizzed the Sergeant in a low tone, jerking his thumb toward the farther chair.

Just then the man looked up from his work and McCarty saw that one eye was badly crossed, while the other gleamed at sight of him with an ugly light.

"Phillippo his name," answered the withered old man. "Gooda man, a'righta. Shina da shoe quick. Too bad he gotta da bum lamp."

It is hard to tell, always, where a cross-eyed man is looking, but Sergeant McCarty thought he caught his glance again over the bent backs of the two sons of Serralunga.

"He coma from da New Orlean lasta da week."

"Does he know anybody here?"

"Notta yet," explained the old man with a shrug and grimace to denote the impossibility of a stranger's making acquaintance so soon.

"Nobody?" pressed McCarty, conscious that the man at the end chair was certainly watching him narrowly and trying to catch every scrap of their conversation.

"Oh!" added the old man, carelessly. "One man I see him spika to yesterday."

Just then the blue-coated form of Sergeant McCarty catapulted over the astonished face of Serralunga!

Philippo had disappeared. Only McCarty and the surprised customer on whom Phillippo was waiting had seen him drop his brushes, clap his hat upon his head and slip round the corner toward Grant Avenue.

When Sergeant McCarty, going like an express train, rounded into Grant Avenue, the man was fifty yards away and flying diagonally across the street.

"Halt!" cried McCarty.

The flying figure did not pause.

A shot rang out; McCarty fired into the

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pavement to frighten him. The man turned back, showing a face horribly distorted with fright, wavered for an instant and crashed headlong against a trolley-pole. In an instant he was up and going again, but the flying Sergeant of police had gained half the distance between them. The man limped, too, and pedestrians threatened him. He thrust one of his hands to his lowered head, which he shook and jerked as if in some kind of distress, but continued to run. As he would have turned down Geary toward Market a lame paper-vender sitting there thrust out his wooden leg. The fugitive saw it too late, and went rolling across the pavement into the gutter.

As he rose, Sergeant McCarty clasped him by the neck and with an experienced thumb forced open his mouth like a fowl with the pip. The man gulped, gasped and swallowed despite McCarty's grip. For a moment the Sergeant held the grinning yellow teeth wide open to the light and examined the cavernous recesses critically. A small shred of paper, irregular in form, and not larger than a postage-stamp, stuck between two teeth. Deftly the Sergeant removed it.

"The stomach-pump for you, Philippo!" he muttered, the hard Celtic burr in his voice grating relentlessly.

Half an hour later the Sergeant sat before a huge sheet of blotting paper which lay upon his own desk at the police-station. On the blotter were numerous irregular bits of paper, on which were written words or parts of them, and scraps of sentences. The bits were soaked and discolored. By the aid of two pens the Sergeant picked and moved them about upon the blotter, forming them into various combinations, without touching them with his fingers. Something seemed lacking. The Sergeant essayed a new and final arrangement of the irregular bits and studied them intently once more, finally flinging down the pens with an exclamation of impatience.

"Doc!" he called sharply.

"Yes," answered a lazy voice in the next room.

"Prime that Dago with a quart of water and draw again! I saw him put it all in his mouth, and it ain't all here."

It was night when the Sergeant left the police-station. He had the missing word. He knew the boy was still in San Francisco. He knew that to-night he would be moved to a place outside the city more secure from discovery and where, if the plan for ransom failed, he would be heartlessly murdered by cruel men who would vent their spiteful rage and disappointment upon his little body with nameless cruelties.

If the Sergeant could prevent the removal of the boy, he might save his life and capture his conspirators. If not, there was little hope. He had therefore but a few hours to work—but three or four at most in which to locate the place of concealment, plan the rescue, execute it and effect the capture. Anxiety showed deep on his face as he left the station and took a Larkin Street car, intending by a roundabout way to reach the North Beach District. Two things pointed toward the North Beach District. This was the Italian quarter of the city, and it was near the water; for though the note did not say so, Sergeant McCarty had somehow gathered the impression that the removal was to be made by water.

As he rode, he reasoned. Where, now? Where? Given three of four men, probably a woman, and the boy. Where would they lie in wait for a week, and whence decide to move to a place more secret? McCarty must know, and know to-night, and his only resource was his intimate knowledge of the criminal classes, of the buildings large and small in the Italian quarter, and the wonderfully keen intuitions of his seldom erring brain. He avoided the light. He tramped through shadows. He lurked among the great lumber-piles and listened and looked and pondered.

Suddenly an idea rose in the darkness of his uncertain mind like a moon on midnight.

Solomon's warehouse! Why, of course! The very place! Solomon was a Jewish rag merchant. For thirty years the ruined walls of an old stone brewery had cumbered the ground there. Fire had destroyed it in the early seventies. For some reason it was never rebuilt. The strange, vaultlike cellars, with their peculiar arches and passageways, had been a playground for children, the camping spot of Gipsies and the abode of goats and pigs by turns. McCarty, when a freckled gamin, had explored them many a time. Finally, Solomon leased the site, made use of the walls standing to the first story to stretch a corrugated iron roof upon,

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put in some floors and gradually covered more and more of the ruin until his warehouse became a feature of the North Beach landscape. Then Solomon died and Italians succeeded to his rag business, but still the place was called "Solomon's Warehouse," and still the name stood in the thought of many for that network of underground vaults and passages which had been a natural part of the old brewery's equipment, but which now, roofed over, obscured, forgotten, might afford lodgment and shelter for whatever mystery or crime should choose such an abiding place.

Solomon's warehouse, to be sure! Sergeant McCarty, from the instant his thoughts had led him thus far on the way, had no more doubt that the abductors of little Pietro were concealed in some of those cavernous reaches of filth and darkness than he had that he was himself a Sergeant of Police. The street, on which it stood, was a lonely one, lined with lumber-piles, junk-yards, coal-bunkers and the like. Sergeant McCarty approached it carefully. An arc-lamp from the next cross thoroughfare threw a brilliant ray into the street and that was all. This cross street was one leading to Fisherman's Wharf, from which McCarty opined they would likely embark if a water route were chosen. The Sergeant knew the party would never come out into such a glare as the arc-lamp made, but he knew too, as they did, that that lamp would go out at twelve o'clock.

The darkness was unrelieved. He literally felt his way back through the alley and down the incline to the crumbling archway which admitted to the basement. The air was heavy with the smell of sweat-stained rags coming down from above, and of filth of every kind.

The stillness was appalling. He dared not strike a match. Somewhere in that labyrinth the San Francisco branch of the Society of the Black Hand, if McCarty's theory was correct, would be foregathering to-night. The Society would consist at most of less than ten men, each a desperado, distrusting all the world and his own comrades. They were men who would shoot at a flash of light, who would knife at a touch in the dark, and who were keyed to high nervous tension by the fear which, pressing closer and closer, to-night compelled their flight to other quarters. And those fears were heightened by the knowledge that one of their number was in the hands of the police and that the most dangerous criminal hunter on the Pacific Coast was probably on their trail.

So McCarty listened, and felt his way along by walls and rough paving-blocks, hardly daring to breathe. He was going due west. Some fifty feet along this western passage he should find one turning north, a narrower one, arched lower, and at the end of that, if memory served him from that childhood day when he had known these caverns as a place of sport, a large square chamber opened off from this, with a passageway leading out of that north again to what he supposed had been the engine-room. This was the most remote and difficult of access.

He felt his way for a dozen feet along the second passage, when he began to be oppressed by a sense that he was not alone. He stopped and peered around him. He heard no sound but his own breathing. He listened long and intently. Once the squeak of a scurrying rat burst upon his ears, like the whistle of a locomotive. He could not be sure that there was not also a sound that might have been the smothered sobbings of a child.

He resumed his slow way onward. Presently he lost the friendly wall upon his right. It turned sharply away from him. He stood groping, wondering and thrusting out a cautious foot, feeling this way and that. Somewhere hereabouts there used to be an old cistern that, with walls broken, half filled with sea-water at each high tide. There came to him now the smell of the sea and the faint lapping of water.

The Sergeant halted again, overcome by the oppressive feeling that he was not alone. He refrained from reaching out a finger for fear he might touch something, but stood with his hands at his sides, his body crouching forward, his legs slightly bent, ready for attack or defense.

Besides, he was trying to think. What should any one be in that place for without a light unless it were some one who had seen him enter and was dogging his footsteps? But he did not believe any one had seen him enter. He had been careful in his approach. He was sure, as a careful detective may make himself sure, that he had not been followed.

He thought of treachery or of the possibility of strife between factions. It might

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be that one set of men were planning to spirit the boy away from the others, and that there was in the passage with him another figure like himself, slipping noiselessly and darkly toward that most distant underground recess where, if in this place at all, the boy was held, closely guarded.

As if to confirm his suspicions, an odor floated past him, a smell of garlic and sour wine. It seemed to be coming from behind.

Cold sweat stood upon the Sergeant's brow. He tried in vain to pierce the blackness with his eye; yet was the more convinced that prudence would not permit him to use a light.

Shrinking back from the uncanny sound of gently lapping water where the old cistern lay, Sergeant McCarty pressed on along the course which memory charted for him. He had not moved half a dozen groping steps before he again became aware of the presence of another person somewhere in the inky blackness of the corridors. Listening intently, he became convinced that he heard two other persons breathing, or at least he heard one breathing and another groping near. But they moved less certainly than himself.

When at length he had gained the final passage leading to the engine-room he found a blanket serving as a door to that apartment with a wavering, uncertain light showing at the side in a long slit. A single glance revealed the old outlines of the engine-room, but cut up into several rooms by curtains of nondescript character, ragged quilts, bits of gunny-sacking and the like, hung on wires.

The first of these rooms was empty at the moment when the Sergeant gazed upon it. A tallow candle, stuck in a bottle which was mounted on a soap-box, lighted it. Hearing voices in front and yet having in mind the men certainly approaching from behind, the Sergeant stepped quickly into the little room. Through a hole in the sacking he surveyed the next room, a larger one.

In its center was a rough table. Upon the table a smudgy kerosene lamp burned. About it huddled four persons—two men, a woman, and a child. One of the men was, judging by the description given at the department store, he who had written the letter. The other was a heavy-set fellow with flannel shirt open at the throat and with a wide, reddish sash about the middle. The woman was a hard-looking creature and appeared capable of taking a full partner's hand in the enterprise. The fourth person was a white-faced boy of six or seven, who sat very still, looking up with great, fear-troubled eyes into the faces of the others. There was little like conversation. Occasionally one grunted in monosyllables and the other answered. Plainly enough they were ready to depart. The child was bundled up. A sailor's storm-coat lay on the table.

"They're waitin' for midnight when the lamp goes out at the corner," conjectured McCarty, exulting.

A noise in the corridor behind recalled the other element in the situation. Sergeant McCarty's position was extremely embarrassing. To wait in the little ante-room for what came out of the corridor, or to walk forward and face three desperate, anxious persons in front of him seemed the inevitable alternatives. Neither was inviting. He chose instead to fall back into the shadow so far that no one who did not look directly in that corner for a human figure would see him, and the chances were that whoever came after would either pass on into the other room or remain with attention directed toward it.

He had barely immersed himself in this shadow and turned when he saw at the slit in the curtain a pair of eyes and a villainous looking face. The eyes were directed toward the occasional sounds that came from the front. A hand appeared, and in it was a blade that gleamed when it caught the rays of the candle. Cautiously the man drew himself through the curtain, a lean, rangy figure, and as he came into full view McCarty observed that the other hand held a knife also. A double-handed murderer, he stood there, intent, listening, breathless. Another knife-hand appeared, and after it came the figure of a second man, who also carried a second knife. They exchanged glances. As the second pressed round to the side of the first to peer through into the next room he passed where McCarty could have touched him.

The Sergeant stood with his revolver in his hand but carefully held under cover lest a ray from the candle beget a glitter that should betray him. Each passing second stretched his nerves to greater tensity.

Suddenly, as the second man moved slightly, standing beside the first, the knife in his right hand impacted upon the knife in his companion's left. A sharp click sounded

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through the old engine-room. It rang out like a fire-bell. The sailorish looking man leaped up and drew aside the curtain. The two leaped upon the one, and the fourth man rushed to his comrade's assistance. In an instant of time the four men were engaged in deadly combat, uttering harsh cries as they faced each other. The woman danced round the swiftly moving combatants, uttering shrieks and curses. With quick, shuffling steps the men swung round in the semi-darkness to the sickening clash of knives upon each other, the ripping and slashing of clothing and the low grunt of pain that told when a blade had found its mark.

It was Sergeant McCarty's opportunity, and he did not overlook it. Unnoticed, as he thought, he reached the table and seized the boy by the wrist. As he turned to go out past the struggling men he noticed that the four were locked together and the two interlopers were being borne to the ground. He paused and lifted his right hand which held his revolver. He was considering whether he might not stand and wait till his men destroyed each other, after which he could capture the woman and take her out with the boy.

So he stood, holding the child close to his left side, his revolver half poised, when to his utter astonishment, three or four other men appeared in the entrance to the place, one of them carrying a lantern. In the very moment that he looked at them they were blotted out by what seemed to be a blinding flash of light, followed by a heaven full of myriads of shooting stars and darting comets with long tails. This sky suddenly grew dark and he was conscious of nothing more.

How long he remained thus or what happened in the interval he had no means of knowing, but his next sensation was of being jolted rudely over rough ways to the accompaniment of rumbling wheels. His eyes and other awakening senses told him that he had exchanged the darkness and stuffy gloom of the underground caverns for a thick and viewless fog. His hands and feet were tightly bound. Several figures trudged or groped beside him, and in a moment he got the unmistakable saline smell of Fisherman's Wharf. A gag of foul smelling rags filled his mouth. There was nothing to do but think, and the terrible pain in the back of his head, together with the desperate situation in which he found himself, all tended to stimulate cerebration.

His first thought was: "The woman hit me with the lamp." His next: "They have got me on a lumber-truck and are shanghaiing me aboard some craft."

He began to work at his hands. He was not, he judged, bound with cords, but with strips of old sacking. He worked industriously and found them loosening. As the truck stopped upon the wharf, one end was dropped roughly and his helpless body fell heavily to the flooring, his captors laughing noiselessly.

As the Sergeant rolled over he managed to extricate one hand from the loop that bound him and then the other. Tearing the gag from his mouth he leaped upon his surprised captors, knocking one of them clean over the rail into the water, and emitted a yell that would summon every patrolman on the water-front. But his feet were still bound. The momentum of his leap, which was sufficient to carry the attacked man overboard was sufficient to carry him headlong to the wharfing, and before he could rise his captors were upon him. They pinned him to the ground and one pressed a blade that was cold and suggestive against his neck.

He lay very still while they bound him again, this time with cords they slashed from bales of dried fish that lay at hand, and a knot of the same kind was forced into his mouth for a gag. It was thick with incrusted salt and foul with particles of adhering dried fish. The man overboard had speedily clambered up again and vented his spite by a hearty kick which he would have repeated but for lack of time.

Without ceremony Sergeant McCarty was carried down the gangway and dropped into the bottom of a gasoline launch, roomy enough to accommodate the four men and the woman, with a fifth who acted as engineer, and the boy, whose white, staring, silent face told of the agony he had suffered and of the terrible punishment he must have endured before he learned to let no single syllable of sound pass his lips unless he was ordered to make it.

"Where are they taking me?" the Sergeant's mind was asking insistently. Were they shanghaiing him aboard some ship to receive the usual bounty for a sailor, or were they going to hold him, too, for ransom? Or had they devised for him some

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more fiendish and diabolical form of death than could be prepared on the spur of the moment, there in the darkness?

It was strange that a man should go to sleep in McCarty's position, but he did. It might have been the long strain of intent listening; it might have been that the rap on the head was affecting him again. Anyway he lost consciousness, and for how long he had no means of knowing, but his impression was that he might have been asleep for an hour.

When he awoke the engines were still. The men were tying up to some sort of craft. The motion of the launch told him they were in comparatively quiet water, therefore they must have taken him into the Bay and not out to sea—into that great Bay whose arms extend thirty miles northeast and thirty miles due south from San Francisco. But whereabouts in it? He was soon to know.

One of the men slashed the cords that bound his legs together and kicked him heartily in the stomach. The Sergeant took this as an invitation to get up and accepted it immediately, mentally resolving that if he ever got out of this alive he would hunt this fellow down and have Dugan and Meyer hold him while he kicked him till his leg was tired.

Closely guarded by the two men and guided by the light of a lantern, the Sergeant clambered off on to a piece of decking of some kind that swayed with the motion of the waves, and was led along it a dozen steps to a ladder leading up. As the lantern flashed he caught sight of a bulk-head of new lumber, and beyond it the burned ends of planking, and in an instant knew that he was on a marshy island opposite the salt flats some ten miles south of San Francisco. Only a few weeks ago on a duck-hunting expedition he had passed this lonely spot and remembered noticing the old coal-barge which had beached itself here. One end of it some time or other had burned away. It was a lonely spot, to be visited by chance once or twice in a year and then perhaps never again for ten, and that only by some wandering sportsman blown out of his course by the wind.

The Italians had bulk-headed it in the middle back of the burned portion, and it made a tight and absolutely secluded home, its flat roof buried in reeds, shoal water and marsh about it, so that not a sail would approach, and the stranger who happened to pass within sight of it would never care to come nearer.

They led McCarty along the top of the barge for a dozen paces to a closed hatchway. While one pried off the cover, two others bound McCarty's feet again, apparently more securely than ever, and even passed another rope about the knees, drawing it tightly and knotting it with wicked carefulness. After examining the gag and the knots which bound his arms behind his back, they prepared to thrust him into the black opening. As the cover came off there was a scurrying sound beneath.

"We feeda you to de rats, McCart!" said one of them, maliciously.

McCarty found himself lowered head first into the black hole. Presently his legs were released and he crashed upon his sore head to the bottom several feet below, his helpless body straightening out on the floor of the barge with a solid crash. Fortunately the floor was dry, but the alarming squeal of startled rodents and their scurrying feet told him that it was literally alive with them. As his body lurched downward the three men set up a wild, hateful cachination, and hurled after him what he had no doubt were terms of the coarsest opprobrium. They did not think it necessary to re-cover the hatch, and he heard their footsteps above as they hurried on, apparently to another hatchway, and then clattered down a ladder. Light showed at a chink or two and there was a banging of pans, and presently a smell of garlic and greasy cookery.

But his mind did not stray for more than a few moments outside his own immediate quarters. To begin with, the cruelly knotted gag with its heavy incrustations of salt had made his mouth sore and his swollen tongue and distorted lips were bitten by the briny saliva that flowed incessantly. Added to this the particles of drying fish, which had soaked their way into the ropes, had given him a nausea from which he suffered continually. Besides all of which the place was literally alive with rats. They ran over his body, scurried across his face, and seemed to play tag about his ears. He felt cold perspiration starting between his shoulders and before the first rat bit him he was clammy with fear from head to feet.

He called to mind all the stories he had ever heard of people being eaten alive by rats. Once in an abandoned cellar he

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had found a Chinaman literally—but the thought sickened him. He shuddered and tried to drive it from his mind; besides a rat had just bitten him through the ear and he could feel it licking at the trickling blood. In a moment the sharp, impatient teeth had opened a way for a larger flow, and what he judged by the whiskers to be the great-grandfather of all rats was sitting in his face and smelling over it as if determining where to begin operations. Sergeant McCarty shook his head violently. The rat leaped away in fright. He lifted his head and brought it down with all his might on the spot where he supposed the rat which had bitten his ear to be, but missed it and only increased the terrible pain in his throbbing head.

It was not possible to sit up. His hands were bound behind him. They did not allow him to manipulate his shoulders sufficiently to rise. He could only lift his head, strike with his feet both at once, or move his head from side to side. His veins surged with a kind of insane frenzy. His fear passed. In its stead anger possessed him—a hot and terrible rage that made him reckless how he pained himself just so he fought the rats. In his struggles he rolled over upon his face. This proved an advantage. It was easier to defend his face by thrusting it in the corner of the dark hole, and when the rats leaped on top they had only the thick, red hair, stiff as bristles, to gnaw at.

But his hands were defenseless. He clenched and unclenched his fingers, but the rats chewed at them mercilessly. He could move them up and down, however, and strike quite a blow, as he and the rats discovered, but for all that they fought at the hands savagely. In a moment of utter weariness Sergeant McCarty let his hands lie relaxed. The rats might eat them if they would. In that instant he discovered that the rats would not bite at his hands when they lay still. At the same time they were climbing over them, their tiny cold feet dancing up and down in his palms, and all the while they were pulling and hauling at something about his wrists.

His first thought was that they were eating at the starch in his cuffs; his next, and a great wave of hope swept over him from head to foot, was that they were gnawing at the fish-soaked rope that bound his wrists together!

He lay perfectly still. At least he lay as perfectly still as a man can lie who is trembling from head to foot with the joy of a great hope that has suddenly driven black despair out of his soul. Certainly this was exactly what was happening. He could hear their sharp teeth cutting the rope which had been steeped in animal juices. The half starved creatures were eating it voraciously.

From time to time he strained at the bands, startling the rats, but in a few moments they were at the cords again, and within two or three minutes his hands were free. With a mighty sigh of relief he turned over and sat up.

His arms were so stiff that he had to work them up and down like pump-handles for some minutes, but soon the circulation began to come and he was picking with eager fingers at the knots that bound the cruel gag into his mouth. It was an age in loosening, but it came away at last and he spat the hateful thing from him—hatefully, and yet thankfully, for the thing which had made the gag so much more a thing of torture had attracted the teeth of the hungry rats to his wrist cords and made possible his release.

He next attacked the cords that bound his knees and then those at his feet. Each baffled him for a time. Each in the end yielded. McCarty cursed the knots for their slowness, not knowing that though his frenzy of eagerness increased every minute, yet it was well if he were detained, for if presently he was to fight for his life as he proposed to do, the baffling knots had served a good purpose in giving him an exercise of the kind that helped to restore the circulation to his arms, so that when he leaped to his feet with the last knot sundered, the stiffness was gone from his arms and shoulders. Doubling and undoubling his legs, swinging them and manipulating the feet, he was soon thoroughly active.

And then McCarty did one of those wild, incautious, but human things that frequently characterized him in moments of extreme excitement. His next move would seem to have been to draw himself up through the hatchway to the open air, and there consider whether he, who held an engineer's license on account of the police launch which he often navigated, should steal the Italian launch and slip away, glad to make his escape from such foes, or whether he should plan an attack upon the men and attempt

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the rescue of the child. But McCarty did not do this.

Instead, he lifted his brawny arms, filled his chest full of the best air he could get, and emitted a long, hoarse, challenging yell! He was free now. He would exult over that. Presently, hand to hand, and heart to heart, he proposed to fight against four men and beat them, recover the child and take the captors captive, but first, out of his dungeon he shrieked his hoarse challenge ahead of him!

The effect was instantaneous. He heard the shouts of consternation, the words and half words, the clatter of tin dishes, and then the hurrying of feet up the ladder and across the top of his prison. A hairy head was thrust down, peering into the darkness. McCarty, still yelling beneath, more a beast than a man, saw it, plucked at the head savagely with his hands, caught it firmly and pulled the body headlong down to him where, dancing in fiendish joy, he swung it round him like a whip and sent it crashing against the bulkhead!

Another pair of feet clattered across overhead. Another hairy head was thrust through and McCarty caught and pulled it down like the first, the flying boot-heels of the second knocking full in the face of the first, who was rising, and felling him to the floor! A third head appeared more cautiously, but McCarty leaped at it and fixed his fingers in the long, black locks, so that this man, too, came yelling downward. McCarty smote him in the face with his fists. The blood in his veins was hot. He could not talk. His swollen tongue forbade him to swear, but he could emit hoarse yells of frenzied rage, and with the strength of a madman he beat the three men back into a corner, and himself leaped for the open hatchway. He caught it and two motions of his strong body were sufficient to land him on the top of the barge. A man grappled with him as he rose and McCarty seized him with his great arms, bent him half double, lifted him high and sent him crashing downward into the blackness, where he struck upon the three men who were gathering under the open hatch.

The deck was cleared for the moment. The hatch-cover was at McCarty's feet. In a second of time he had flung it into place and fastened the catches. The four men were prisoners. The fifth should be coming up from the cabin. Sergeant McCarty leaped toward the other hatch from which a faint shaft of yellow light arose. He threw himself belly-wise and peered within. The room was empty save for the woman and the child. The woman looked startled. The child was asleep. The fifth man had disappeared!

McCarty lifted his head and listened. Above the clamor of wild voices, the hoarse curses and shrieks of malediction, he heard the starting of a gasoline engine. He dashed to the other side. The launch was moving! Some strange intuition of fear had come to the engineer. He was making off, leaving his companions in the lurch. McCarty leaped down upon him and fought him, eye to eye, life against life, for the mastery of the boat, and in the end McCarty won. Senseless with a blow from a wrench, the Italian lay flat in the hold, and McCarty was tying up again, hastily, his one great fear now being for the safety of the child. The woman, fearing his escape or recapture, might murder him as he slept. Or she might have climbed out and removed the hatch-cover, releasing the captives.

It was the latter that had happened. As the Sergeant clambered to the top of the barge he made out in the gray mist of the early dawn the figure of the woman stooping by the hatchway. Two men were with her upon the roof, and all three were reaching downward as if to help the others. The men instantly turned toward the Sergeant.

McCarty was like a tiger in his ferocity, but cunning. He was unarmed. The men would draw knives as they leaped at him. He gave ground around the edge of the barge, the men following warily, until he reached the hatch-cover. He seized it with a swift movement and by a sudden turn brought it crashing down upon the skull of the nearest man. A pistol flashed from the other but the shot missed, and the hatch-cover fell again with deadly effect. At this moment another head and shoulders appeared at the hatchway, the woman helping. McCarty raised his heel and brought it down with all his might on the flat top of the black head. The man dropped like a log. The woman screamed. The Sergeant picked her up by the hair and one shoulder and dropped her into the hold. She fell with a frightened squawk into the darkness.

With the heedlessness of savage haste McCarty gathered up the two men upon the deck, one of whom struggled and the

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other of whom lay quite still, and flung them downward into the dungeon-like hold of the old coal-barge. A chorus of groans, shrieks and wild-tongued curses rose from it. McCarty, raving with the heat of elemental passion, screamed back at them insulting words, as once more he clapped down the hatch and fastened it. Then he stood upon it and drew a full, free breath of relief and tried to calm himself.

He had conquered. He had won a great victory—the greatest victory of his life, and he was happy. But his heart beat like a bludgeon against the walls of his chest. His veins were hot. A fiery thirst scorched his throat.

The morning breeze blew damp with fog against his face and cooled it. He had won. Beneath him were fierce mutterings and angry hammerings of helpless hands upon solid unyielding timbers—and he was master—absolute master!

He went below and found a water-can. He drank from it long and luxuriously, careless that the water gurgled out around his broken lips and splashed on his blood- and sweat-stained features and down upon his chest. He had fought desperately and won! He smote himself proudly upon the chest. Then a thought came to him. The boy! The occasion of all this soul-straining struggle!

There was a slight figure beneath an unclean-looking blanket in the ill-smelling bunk; but the figure was very, very still. With a sharp intake of breath McCarty for a moment stood transfixed. A horrible fear seized him. Perhaps the boy was dead. Perhaps the woman had plunged a knife into his heart before she ran up the ladder. The boy lay half face down. The Sergeant could not at first make himself lift the blanket. Instead he looked intently at it. In a moment it stirred, rose slowly and fell, and then another time, and another—the long, deep, regular breathing of the healthful sleep of innocent childhood.

The Sergeant tore off the blanket. He clasped the warm body to his heart and held it tight—held it there against his bosom, gently, and then more gently, while through all his flesh there came a change, a sort of rehumanizing of himself. He who, frenzied, had a moment ago fought like a beast and through whose hot veins still surged the torrential blood of mortal combat, pressed the soft cheek to his hard one in a kind of ecstasy, till the child looked up at him, surprised by his gentleness, saw the swollen, bloody, ferocious-looking face, and was terrorized by it. But McCarty spoke soothingly, and patted his slender burden affectionately for a few moments till the frightened beatings of the little heart were quieted.

Presently they were in the launch. Its prow was turned northward. The boy lay upon the seat. The engineer moaned unconsciously in the bottom. The engine snapped and sputtered. The salt brine played frothfully with the prow. The Sergeant's keen eyes searched the fog. He knew that in another hour the police-boat would be at the barge taking off the prisoners. He knew, too, that in the same length of time the Italian mother would be clasping her child to her bosom, while Sergeant McCarty for the time would have ceased to be. And a great, red-headed boy of a man with swollen face would be rolling in his stocking-feet upon the floor, romping with excited, rollicking children that called him father, until a comfortable, homely woman called:

"Mike, yer coffee's ready! Come drink it while 'tis hot! Then it's a bath and yer bed fer ye, and 'tis mesilf will see Chief Brandt ner that Dago woman ner them lads Dugan and Meyer nor nobody else have ye out of it till ye get yer sleep out!"

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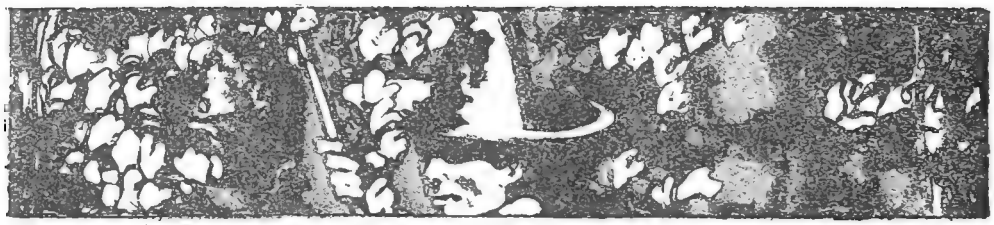

ON THE WAY TO LA GLORIA

By Edward S. Moffat

ALTHOUGH part of this story may seem to be about Cecil Pankhurst and myself and some others, yet most of it relates to Harry True. For that reason it is not so humorous as if it were written entirely about the irresponsible Britisher, because True was another type of man, and not constantly getting into wild affairs and having to be dug out by me or Miss Inez Chavarrez's powerful relatives.

Instead, he pounded doggedly along in his mines up at La Bufa, came eighty miles to town once a month with his gold bars, left them at the Banco del Pacifico, said "hello" at the Lotos Club and then went back that same day, generally stopping over night at old Doña Guadalupe Becerra's on the edge of the corn country to see what was doing among the despised agrarians.

I do not think that Harry True was a man with some great secret sorrow, as our romantic Mexican girl friends professed to believe. He simply preferred work to society because, after some years of knocking about, he was trying to make good.

I had always liked True. He wasn't a big man like Pankhurst, but rather slight, though undeniably wiry, with fair hair, small hands and feet and a sweet, twisted smile. He wasn't precisely ugly and yet he wasn't handsome, being rather quiet and thin, but somehow, if he and you and a beautiful lady were together anywhere the beautiful lady always fell in love with poor True instead of yourself. I mentioned this to Maida Rubio, a very nice girl whom I knew, and a bosom friend of Inez Chavarrez, and learned that Cecil had similarly complained about it to Inez. I don't know why I speak of this, as it didn't seem to interest either of the two girls, and so must probably have been the most awful piffle, but perhaps it shows what a lovable fellow True was.

He was also a very sensitive chap. Once he spoke feelingly to me of having seen down in Tepic a boyhood friend from the Ohio town where they'd both lived, whom *tequila* had got by the back of the neck and who had gone completely to the bad and had been put in the *carcel* for some irregular conduct. True had got him out of jail, clothed him, fed him and had been repaid by having him at once repeat his performances, this time with something actually criminal.

"But Ike wasn't *always* that way," said Harry, choking a little. "Just think what the poor duffer must have gone through—to turn from a good boy with a bad streak into a bad man with a good streak!"

"I believe I'd as lief have him the latter," said I cynically. "Your surprises, then, are only pleasant ones. But how do you know he had even a good streak?"

"He wanted to give me back my sister's photograph," Harry said in a low voice. "He said he hadn't a right to it any longer. He knew, of course, of Sally's death—and yet he'd carried that picture for practically ten years."

"I'm very sorry," I murmured. "I didn't know that you'd been as close as that."

"Poor, bad Ike," said Harry. "It always makes it worse to have your bad friends love you," and then he said no more about it.

It was shortly after Saint John-the-Baptist's Day, when the rains begin and it gets unmercifully hot in town, that Cecil announced that Inez and Mama Chavarrez had invited himself, and Miss Rubio and

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myself, to their summer home at La Gloria up in the "high" *sierra*.

"I rather fancy there's some shooting up there," said he. "Overgrown cats, and half-portion deer and that sort of thing—and some new beast called an armadillo."

"You'll want your elephant-gun for that," said I.

"I asked at Ketelsen's but they hadn't ammunition for it," said he innocently. "So I bought a 30-30 Winchester like yours and a patent Yankee revolver that shoots a perfectly sickening number of shots in no time at all. Personally I detest automatics, and shall rely on my Webley if attacked at close quarters."

"How do we go, and when?" I asked, for I had no time to lose in preparing.

"From here to Posole by *diligencia* tomorrow, then up the La Bufa trail on mules as far as Candelaria and thence to La Gloria. Antonio Navarette and Pancho Soto go along as *mozos*. And I've bought the cunningest little traveling bath arrangement you ever saw," he added enthusiastically. "It's another of your clever Yankee notions. You see, it's nothing in the world but a rubber bag. Well, you hang this bag up on a nail in the wall. You must pound the nail in as far as you can, because you have to fill the bag with water. Then, there's a *tube* and a *brush*. Now, the *brush* is fastened to the *tube*. D'ye see?"

"I see," said I. "Grasping the tube in your hand, you jump up in the air, turn, and descend head-on into the bag."

"No-no, no-no!" said he hurriedly. "Why, man, it only holds a quart! That's the beauty of it! Now, the bristles in this brush are really not *bristles* at all—they're *tubes!*"

"What? *More* tubes? How many tubes are there altogether?"

"Well," said he, "the brush, of course, in the general shape of an ellipse——"

"Is it a true ellipse?" I asked anxiously.

"N-no," said he reluctantly. "It isn't precisely a *true* ellipse. It's a trifle too flat for that——"

"You can easily figure it out if you remember the formula," I said. "Plotting these tubes at a distance of, say, five millimeters apart and knowing the precise area of the elliptical surface, the quantity of water in the bag would become less unknown than uncertain. If, now, you will let 'x' equal the nail in the wall——"

At this point I detected Cecil hunting in blind rage through his pockets for the new automatic, and so left him and sought sanctuary in the Club.

Very early the next morning we started, six in all, counting fat Mama Chavarrez and the *cochero*, and by nightfall had made Posole where Doña Guadalupe lived, coming up through the flat corn and tobacco lands to the foot of the dark green *sierra*.

Doña Guadalupe lived in a white-walled, adobe house three hundred years old. I do not doubt the figures because she herself must have been much older. Her face looked exactly like a withered walnut and she tottered around on the uneven bricks of the *portal* among her educated pigs and chickens as if each move would be her last, which it never was. But she was an amazingly shrewd old person, and knew everything of local interest, from the size of the corn crop to the next visit of the internal revenue inspector, which is looked forward to with the same panting eagerness as the approach of the plague.

It was excessively hot that night, and neither Cecil nor I could sleep, even on hard canvas cots. So we arose somewhere around midnight and got some beer out of the red clay *olla* where we'd put it to cool, and walked about on the cold flags of the courtyard in our pajamas, imbibing from the bottles, and planning great slaughter among the vicious armadillos.

It was very still there, in the soft southern night, with only faint dream-noises from the pigs and chickens and a subdued rumble from the room where slept Mama Chavarrez and the two young ladies. While I was commiserating with Cecil over the undoubted ownership of the snore, and telling him how very sorry I was, a horse's shoe clinked silverly against a stone in the road without.

We stole to the street door and unbolted it. The night overhead was clear and bright, although wreaths of cobweb-like mist drifting in from the river were smokily fringing the thatched *jacales* of Posole, and we could see the juncture of the two mountain trails and the river road. From Posole, then, one could come or go on five routes, including the ford, and as we looked we saw, in the space of a few minutes, four horsemen come from as many directions and poke their animals up the mountain trail to La

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Bufa. One was tall, and one was fat and burly, and one had glinting silver bosses on his mule's head-stall and his stirrup leathers. The fourth man wore no spurs, or faintly tinkling ornaments. He rode like an American, erect and with his hands held low, and from the waist down he seemed part of the animal beneath him, so imperceptibly did he sway. Shadowy and silent, with sombreros down to their eyes, and muffled to their chins in *serapes*, the unknown night-riders stole out of the dark forest and the wraithlike mist, padded swiftly by, and were gone.

I looked at Cecil to see what he thought. But Cecil only yawned and said that his feet were cool now and that he fancied he could sleep, so we both went back to our cots.

At dawn, as we were about to climb on to our mules, I mentioned the episode of the night-riders, all going La Bufa way, to Doña Guadalupe and asked what *she* thought about it. I noticed that she delayed her answer until we were actually in motion, and then the old crone said only two words, and saw fit to whisper those. "El Mosco" ("The Fly"). But since I didn't know who or what "El Mosco" was, and because I wanted to keep close to Miss Rubio (merely in case of accident on the trail), I rode along without much else in my powerful mind, and promptly forgot all about the mysterious birds of the night.

We climbed hard all morning, getting up from the succulent, tropic vegetation and the soft, red hillsides to where the centuries-old trail lay deep worn in the white *cantera* rock, and where the trees were all *ocotes*, and the air was full of resinous, piney odors. We all grew so happy up there, winding light-heartedly along the trail in the keen atmosphere and the bright sunlight, that I began to wish for Harry True. And that made me think again of the La Bufa trail and the night-riders, and so when we made Candelaria, where you choose between La Bufa and the pine-topped heights of La Gloria, I said I thought I'd go on for a night at True's.

"But you can't do that, Don Ricardo," said Inez very promptly. "This is the day he brings his bars to the bank. Concha Suarez's papa owns the bank, and she told me so."

I looked at her, puffing out my cheeks and thinking. Sure enough, it was True's *conducta* day.

"Who is this 'El Mosco' person?" I asked abruptly. "He and three others went up this trail last night."

At this Mama Chavarrez gave me a startled look and nearly fell off her mule.

"El Mosco!" she gasped. "*Los bandidos! Valgame Dios!* Antonio! Pancho! *El Mosco esta en camino!* Oh, why did I bring these two children!" she wailed. "Aye-Dios! El Mosco will murder us all!"

"Do you know what that means?" said I to Pankhurst in English, above the uproar of Spanish from the women and the excited jabbering of the *mozos*. "That means that it's up to you and me to get Harry True out of trouble!" And we both got down and began to cinch up our mules.

"The automatic is in my saddle-bags," Cecil cried out, as he tugged frantically at his cinch. "There are extra cartridges for the 30-30's there, too. Best dump 'em loose in your pocket, old man."

"Nothing's loaded, you know," I muttered back, and pulled my Winchester from its saddle sheath. "Load up now, while you've got time, Cecil," and for one still moment we stood there breathing hard and filling the magazines with bright, cold cartridges.

"He'll be about ten miles out of La Bufa by now," I said as I worked. "The next few miles will tell the story. They'll lay for him in that big *barranca* as sure as fate! They can ride up the river-bed then, and get over the mountains into Durango."

"Don't figure on what *they'll* do," said Cecil angrily. "What *we've* got to do is to get to True." "Inez!" he yelled commandingly, "I want you to go up to La Gloria as fast as you can."

By this time, I suppose, it had been made clear to the women what we were getting ready to do, because the two girls exchanged pallid looks and slipped silently down from their mules. The next few moments were very confused.

"I won't *go* to La Gloria!" I heard Inez crying to Cecil, from somewhere inside his coat. "I'll stay right here till I die if you don't come back!"

Of course, there wasn't any one to interfere with *me*, and I was much relieved about it until Maida Rubio, white-faced and quiet, took the bridle out of my hand.

"Why, Maida—don't do that!" I stammered. "I've got to *go!* It's True, you know,—Harry True. He'll be in trouble!"

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"I know," she whispered, her great soft eyes blurring away everything in the world for me but a quivering white face. "I know I have no right to keep you, or even ask you to stay, but——"

As I said, it was all very confused, and I caught a glimpse of Mama Chavarrez crying as if her heart would break, and one of the useless *mozos* scooting up the trail to La Gloria, but what I principally remember is what I am not allowed to write about, so there you are.

We left them then and rode straight up the hill. Gaining the summit of the *cordon* we paused an instant to stare across the green walled cleft of the *barranca* at the trail zigzagging down from La Bufa.

"No signs of True," I shouted to Cecil over my shoulder. "That means he's not down the hill yet, in which case we'll be held up, or else he's down in the river-bed and we'll have to hustle."

If we were held up on the trail, which I fully expected, there would be nothing to do but dismount and shoot, which might be the best for True anyway, as he then would hear us. But there wasn't a sound as we plunged down toward the ribbony, white bed of the river, and I began to wonder if we weren't going to come in just on the nick of time. As it happened, that is precisely what we did.

A few hundred yards above the river the trail split. I paused a fraction of a second, then chose the disused descent and spurred down. As I struck the gravel, with Cecil close behind, I saw True's four bar mules a long stone's throw away, just starting the climb-up from the river on the main leg of the trail. Behind them came True on his old white horse, talking to his *mozo*.

But True couldn't see what both Cecil and I saw, and that was the head of a man peering from behind a boulder on a line with the front mule!

I jerked out my revolver and let it go in the air as we galloped. "Look out for the rocks, Harry!" I yelled. "Turn back! Turn back!"

But it was too late. He was up into the trail now, and a carbine spit out its venomous surprise, and the old white horse went down on its knees. Another shot from somewhere, and True's *mozo* clapped his hand to his side with a bewildered expression, then sank down on his face in the dust.

I couldn't see True at all now, as we were below him and at right angles with his line of march, but what I did see was a man crouching by a rock as he pulled a gun stock up to his cheek to shoot. I jerked my mule to a standstill and turned loose with the automatic. I wished it had been Cecil's elephant gun.

The man by the rock wavered, dropped his gun and seemed to bend like a hinge in the middle. Then Cecil at my elbow got into action with the 30-30; I had forgotten all about him. The peering man near the foremost mule had started from behind his shelter, surprised at our first shots, and had forgotten to go back. He didn't seem to know whether to shoot at True, ourselves, or not to shoot at any one. Cecil decided for him—the man failed to shoot at all.

I guess that True, after he'd disentangled himself from the old white horse, which had fallen on him, must have seen these two fall, and thought that it was all over, for he now appeared limping back down the trail into the river-bed! He was waving his hand at us and shouting joyfully. Cecil and I were both standing behind our mules, for we knew there were two more thugs somewhere up there in the rocks, and I began to congeal from my feet up at the sight of Harry, a fair, white mark there all alone.

Up on the hillside on the upper side of the trail a man now started into view. He'd been concealed, like the others, behind either a tree or a boulder, and was one of the two remaining. This man settled his gun into his shoulder and let drive at True.

The bullet fell short. Striking at True's feet, it showered him with gravel, and woke both him and us into action.

But the action didn't bear fruition, at least by me, for I frantically tugged away on the trigger of the automatic only to find that I'd shot out the clip in my first effort! Cecil, too, was in trouble, swearing frightfully over a jammed shell, and beating the gun lever on the horn of his saddle. I froze again as I saw the man pump in another cartridge and crouch down to take a rest for a steadier aim.

Out into the open near his companion stepped the last of the four *bandidos*. This man wore no short, braided riding coat like the others, nor were his trousers the customary tight, *charro* affairs with flaring bottoms. Instead, he stood outlined against the skyline in his shirt-sleeves, an old black vest swinging open, a conical-topped, black

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felt hat on his head. I seemed to recognize a national trait in his swift directness of action. My jaw dropped, for I saw he was no Mexican. We would have to do some shooting now!

The man stopped and threw up his gun. At the almost instant report the carbine slipped loose from its owner's hands and slid jingling down among the stones. He had not shot at either True or Cecil or me, but he had shot and killed his companion!

Startled by the sound of the first shot and the gravel, True whirled about and cocked his revolver. But his enemy had now collapsed behind the boulder, and all True could see was a man with a black felt hat standing out in the open aiming at something with a gun. At that True very naturally threw up his arm and fired.

I don't suppose he could have done it again in a thousand years, for the man was high above him and a hundred yards off. But any way, the whole thing, which had not taken up more than two minutes at the outside, now came to an abrupt end, for the man with the black felt hat threw up his hands in a curious, helpless way, and broke at the waist and knees.

"He shot the other fellow!" I heard myself excitedly shouting to True. "*He* didn't shoot him! *He* shot him!"

But Harry True only stood and stared at us, the revolver slipping from his hand. His face grew perfectly bloodless, drained of every vestige of the healthy color of a moment ago. He looked as if he were about to topple over into the bottomless pit. Presently, with the same awful expression on his face, he turned and made for the trail, stumbling along through the gravel, as if he were walking in a dream.

We found him bending over the American. The man was clutching feebly at True's sleeve, and rasping in his throat.

"I didn't know they were *your* bars, Harry," he was saying faintly, with a humble, dog-like fondness in his eyes. "I was broke, and they 'conned' me into this. But I've paid up, Harry. I—I *got* him for you—and—and I've paid up."

"Good-by old fellow," he mumbled. He groped blindly for True's hand. "I guess—I guess I'm going now."

"Good-by Ike, old man," said Harry, and held him there silently in his arms until presently the body of his boyhood's friend, the good boy with the bad streak, grew cold and his head fell loosely to one side.

Then Cecil did a sensible thing.

"Get up now," he said to True, gently but firmly. "We've all got work to do. We've got to look after your *mozo*, and catch your mules and see that they're all right. And then we've got to go on to town with your bars, and let the authorities know about this, and make depositions, and all that sort of thing. But first we'll look after your *mozo*."

True listened dully, and only nodded his head. He was putting out his hand to the silent form and whispering, as if he were in some way saying a farewell prayer.

"And then we'll come back—come back and bury Ike, won't we?" said True in queer, shaky tones.

"And then we'll bury Ike," said Cecil comfortingly, and we walked him down the trail with our arms tight around him, for he was sobbing like a child.

And so we finally got things straightened out and, putting Harry and his man on our two saddle animals and driving the bar mules ahead, we climbed up out of the Valley of the Shadow, and finally reached the crest.

It seemed pretty good to get up there again. It seemed mighty fine to come up out of that damnable gorge, with its rotten memories, and see a girl waiting at the top of the hill, and see her face turn from white to red, and have her come hurrying down the trail toward you. I'd never known that there *were* things in life like that, and so, I suppose, was pretty foolish about it, but I guess it was all worth while.

But it took poor, blameless True a long time to brace up, and not until we'd got back in town did he get into decent shape again. There Cecil and I reported the attacking force as composed of three men, and stuck to it so manfully that even Harry came out of his glooms at the spectacle of Ananias being backed off the dump.

"And that's perfectly true, after all," said he faintly, after we'd had our conference with the *Jefe Politico*. "Ike didn't *mean* to do it."

But Cecil, who was improving, only looked blankly at Harry with a heaven-sent British stare and said: "I'm quite sure I haven't the *faintest* idea what you are talking about."

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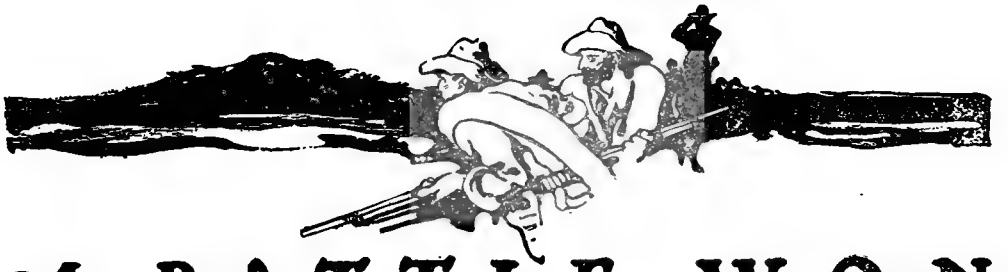

A BATTLE WON

by Donal Hamilton Haines

PENDLETON had dug a shallow hole for his hip-bone with his trowel-like intrenching tool and had rolled into his blankets with every assurance that he would be aroused by the shrilling of brass trumpets and a roar of battle. Instead, he was dragged slowly from his sleeping state by the insistent crowing of a rooster. Pendleton had watched the rooster during the day—a scrawny fowl who had fallen victim to the wiles of the foraging company cook. Presently, through the thin wall of the shelter-tent he could hear the cook lamenting the fact that he had not slit the cock's throat that day and calling down the wrath of the gods on the whole race of chickens for disturbing his slumbers.

On the ground beside Pendleton lay Brown, his tent-mate. Brown had served six years in the regular army and was of vast benefit to Pendleton, although he came far from reaching that young man's ideals of martial perfection. Brown lay now with one ragged blue sleeve under his bearded cheek, snoring peacefully. Pendleton stared at him anxiously, divided between an intense desire to awaken him and fear of the consequent profanity.

Finally he gave in to his fears and took to cleaning his rifle, taking care to be quiet in the operation. A careless movement of the cleaning-rod brought Brown's cartridge-belt crashing to the ground, and Brown sat up with a grunt. For a second he stared at Pendleton with an owlish, vacant intenseness. Then he demanded:

"What ye doin'?"

"Cleaning my rifle," Pendleton explained with an air of guilt.

"What time is it?"

Pendleton produced his watch and scratched a match, his companion watching proceedings with all the gravity of a judge. Pendleton confessed that it was only three o'clock. The rooster crowed as he spoke.

Brown offered no reply. He stared at the younger man with the aggrieved air of a disappointed parent, sighed, shook his head and went back to sleep. Pendleton finished the operation of cleaning the rifle, then carefully counted the cartridges in his belt. This done, he adjusted and readjusted the complicated-looking military sights, estimating in his mind the distances of various familiar pieces of landscape and trying to imagine just how big a man would look a thousand yards away. He wanted to ask Brown about this and a hundred other things. Anxiously he looked again at his watch. It was seventeen minutes after three.

He leaned back in his blankets, thinking of the dreams that he had just passed through, as a man will suddenly after being awake for a little time. He remembered trying to climb a hill whose summit was crowned by a picturesquely orderly line of men in scarlet coats, canary-colored trousers and riding-boots. Instead of guns they had carried yardsticks. The explanation of these yardsticks was just about to be made when the rooster's racket had roused him. The rhythmic sound of Brown's snoring merged gradually into the noise made by the men in canary-colored trousers measuring the hill with their yardsticks, and Pendleton slept again.

At the far end of the great camp where Pendleton slept, a light had been burning steadily in a tent slightly larger than the others and set apart from the rest. A group of tired-looking horses held by drowsy orderlies were faintly outlined in the darkness. The wire of a field-telegraph, dropping from a slender pole to the door of the

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tent, shone faintly in the light which came through the canvas. Sounds of low-voiced conversation and the scratching of innumerable matches kept the orderlies barely awake.

Suddenly there was a louder murmur from within the tent, the telegraph key commenced clicking sharply, and a little knot of men issued from the tent and climbed stiffly into their saddles. Ten minutes later a bugle, in the hands of some man who had never earned his position by merit, began calling in the darkness. Other bugles took up the note, until the whole vast stretches of the great camp reverberated.

Pendleton sat bolt upright with the brazen notes dinning in his ears. Now surely, he thought, Brown would awaken. But Brown slept on peacefully until Pendleton prodded him.

"Hear the bugles?" he demanded breathlessly.

Brown took a stretch that made his bones crack, and revelled in an enormous yawn.

"Oh, yes," he said, "I hear 'em. Sweet soundin' things, ain't they?"

Pendleton nodded eagerly.

"They make me feel shaky up and down my back," he confessed.

Brown pulled on his trousers and stared at the young man blankly. There were things about Pendleton which he did not understand. He did not even attempt to fathom them. The boy hurried his dressing with fingers that shook. He eyed his rifle and the short bayonet in its sheath with evident relish.

"There'll be a battle to-day, won't there?" he asked anxiously.

"Maybe so," admitted Brown grudgingly. "They will happen sometimes in spite o' the army."

Pendleton started pulling on his socks, looking with concern at a large, white blister on the heel of his left foot. The thought of walking on that was not pleasant.

"Better grease them feet," suggested Brown, busy with a paste of some sort which he was digging from a yellow tin can.

"There isn't time," answered Pendleton. "I'll do it to-night. Anyhow, I used all my vaseline on my rifle."

"You didn't!" exclaimed Brown, then he shook his head in the same pained uncomprehending way and went on with his dressing. They strapped on their belts and went out into the cool June air. The camp of the regiment lay in a rolling, open country, with only a patch of hardwood dotting the landscape at different points. A hundred yards back of the last row of tents the steel rails of a railway line ran between their parallels of barbed wire fence, and far to the north the morning smoke of a city blackened the sky.

Pendleton stood for an instant in the door of the tent and rubbed his eyes. The artillerymen belonging to the regimental battery were watering their horses in a shallow creek which flowed through the field. On all sides of them rose the smoke of tiny fires, and the smell of coffee and bacon was thick in the air. A few paces away from them the cook, busy with a great kettle of coffee, was eyeing the wretched rooster in speechless wrath.

"You take that darned bird 'long with you," he bawled as he saw the two men. "I ain't got time to kill him!"

Pendleton found his appetite waning when the men grouped around the steaming kettle. Across the rail fence on the north of the big field he could see long winding columns of brown-clad infantry moving east. The puffing of many locomotives sounded to the north, drew nearer and nearer until a long train of flat-cars, each one crowded with more of the brown soldiers, crawled into sight around a curve in the track. Pendleton watched with interest. There were three locomotives, puffing laboriously, and behind them stretched an interminable line of flat-cars. The men on the cars shouted at the gunners, watering their horses in the creek, until finally the last of the cars passed out of sight.

Brown looked up at the cloudless sky as they started back to their tent.

"Goin' to be one fine, scorchin' day for hikin'," he announced.

"We'll never notice it in the excitement of battle," Pendleton assured him.

"Oh, won't we?" demanded Brown with a scornful grunt, and commenced pulling tent-pegs.

Pendleton found it hard to bring himself to the ordinary things of camp life. There was much to be seen on all sides of him—and vastly more to be guessed. While he was engaged in taking apart the jointed ridge-pole of the tent, three entire batteries went by on the north and south road at a steady trot, the harnesses jingling, the men

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bobbing around dizzily on the jolting seats, the whole clattering, clanking column enveloped in rolling white clouds of dust.

"If you've finished lookin' I'll take that stick," Brown reminded him, and Pendleton fell to work again.

By the time they shouldered their blanket-rolls Pendleton was aware that it was tremendously hot. The slight breeze that had blown in the early morning had given it up. The pall of smoke above the distant city hung almost motionless in the air. The weight of his blanket-roll, gun and ammunition began to assume serious proportions.

"We won't have to carry all this into battle, will we?" he inquired anxiously.

"You'll have to carry it," replied Brown, "until you think you're totin' a mattress an' a furnace an' a whole pantry full o' dishes—an' then you'll have to carry it a ways farther!"

The company lines were formed in the field. The thick, heavy grass was still damp with dew, but it looked terribly hot in the roads beyond. The battery lumbered out into the road and clattered away, and the first company of infantry began filing through a gap in the fence.

"Ouch!" yelled Pendleton as he took the first step. Brown grinned sympathetically.

"Blister?" he asked cheerfully.

"Uh-huh," said Pendleton; "and a wrinkle in my sock, too!"

"Joy!" remarked Brown, and the company wheeled into column of fours and trailed into the road. There were six companies on the road ahead of them, and the scuffing feet of six hundred men had raised the dust in thick clouds, which hung in the still air and settled slowly. Already the scrub oak, willows and burdocks along the ditches were powdered thick. The first choking mouthful set Pendleton coughing and sputtering and settled in his eyes. Before he had gone a dozen yards he found that he could breathe it without gasping, but it hurt his eyes terribly. He comforted himself by the thought that when it came to actual fighting they would leave the road for the fields where there was no dust.

The wrinkle in the sock slid until it came just over the blister and then settled. He tried setting his foot down stiffly on the toe without touching the heel. This proved unsatisfactory; it eased the heel, but it hurt the muscles of his calf. The regiment tramped two straight miles down the fence-lined road and then came to a jolting halt at a cross-road. Pendleton peered through the dust and saw that the column had been cut in two by a passing regiment of cavalry moving along the cross-road. He watched the troopers with shining eyes; they were more to his liking. Their blue tunics and scarlet trousers shone in the sunlight, and the white pennons on their lances snapped in the air. They seemed to enjoy keeping the infantry waiting. There was a constant interchange of chaffing between the two columns. The last of the cavalrymen, a short corporal on a white horse, shifted his lance to the bridle hand, put his thumb to his nose and twiddled his fingers derisively at the infantrymen, who swore roundly in reply.

"Dog-gone them cavalry!" snorted Brown. "Ain't a bit of use an' always gettin' in the way!"

The idea of such brilliant soldiers being of no use rankled in Pendleton's mind.

"History shows——" he commenced argumentatively, but Brown was talking about dogs to the man on the other side of him, and Pendleton kept still. The column wheeled to the north and followed in the wake of the cavalry over a road which was even dustier than the one they had left. Pendleton learned to hitch his shoulders and ease the weight of his blanket-roll, which was growing intolerable. The pain in his foot, however, did not lessen. The road stretched straight before them and the regiment plodded steadily. All that they saw through the dust was more troops moving this way and that. All that they heard was the sound of men's voices swearing at the dust, and the shuffling of thousands of feet.

Once Pendleton saw a clump of officers gathered about a man with a flag on a hill-top close to the road. The man was waving the flag frantically at something on the other side of the hill, and the officers were writing in notebooks. The man with the flag stopped waving and mopped his face violently with a red handkerchief. Pendleton decided that it was not so much cooler in the fields after all. He glanced at Brown and found that the latter had tied his handkerchief cowboy fashion about his face to keep out the dust. Brown's stolid indifference and lack of interest in what might happen galled him.

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"When is the battle going to start?" he demanded childishly.

"Never, I hope," Brown growled through his dust-guard. "Fightin's hotter'n marchin'—an' that's bad enough!"

They passed a mile-post, from which the beating of wind and rain had washed everything but a noncommittal legend which read "7 miles to." Pendleton wondered what it was that it was seven miles to. The idea of seven miles stuck fast in his mind. Would they have to walk that far? Possibly it meant the city whose smoke he had seen that morning—a city which he had been told he was helping to defend against the invading army. He could not see exactly what good he was doing as a defender, marching along a dusty road away from the city, with nothing in sight but a red-faced man waving a flag. Battles, he had understood, commenced at daybreak, when the uncertain light added to the sublimity of the scene.

The pain in his blistered foot increased. It commenced to climb his ankle and spread into his leg. He would not have believed that he could endure such agony and keep on walking. Had he been at home he would have made a fuss about it. He wanted to do so now, but he had no faith in Brown's sympathy. At length he began to limp and he felt that the limp demanded explanation.

"My foot hurts like sin," he confessed.

"Never mind; your rifle won't rust," Brown comforted him, still thinking of the wasted vaseline.

The hot air somewhere shook suddenly with the roar of a field-gun. Another followed it, and soon a whole battery was thumping in the distance. Between the dull reports of the guns sounded a sharper, rattling sound. Pendleton's heart leaped and for a moment the pain in his foot and the galling of his accouterments were forgotten. He looked at Brown inquiringly. The latter nodded.

"There's your battle, kid," he said. "Like it?"

Pendleton nodded. He thought of so many questions he wanted to ask about it that he could think of nothing to say. He tried to locate the noise of firing more exactly, but failed. Now it seemed to him that it came from straight before them, and again it seemed to be to the rear. For a few minutes the sound thrilled him, then it commenced to grow monotonous. There was no change in it—just the eternal thudding of the big guns and the sharper crackling of the rifles. It did not even grow louder or fainter, but held the same note like the buzzing machinery of a shop. It was no longer sufficient to keep the physical discomfort of his body off his mind.

His limp became more pronounced, and the bottoms of his feet burned like fire. The dust had settled in his eyes until they ached and smarted, and his mouth felt dry and parched. He could no longer ease his shoulder by shifting his blanket-roll. Both places where it had rested were galled and chafed. He felt that the flesh beneath his army shirt must look like the shoulder of an over-worked horse. His rifle had come to weigh tons, and his bayonet-sheath pounded insistently against his hip. It reminded him of the torment he had suffered in a dentist's chair when the strokes of the tiny hammer seemed to go clear through the roof of his head. He was certain that the pounding sheath had worn a perceptible groove in his hip.

"How far have we got to march?" he asked a lean man on his left. The man shook his head. Pendleton turned to Brown with the same question.

"Dunno," answered that veteran cheerfully. "Depends on what they're goin' to do with us."

"Aren't you tired?" Pendleton wanted to know.

"Not this early in the mornin'," replied Brown, and buried his mouth beneath the handkerchief as though to shut off further conversation.

Pendleton found himself taking a subconscious sort of interest in the leggings of the man in front of them. At first he only wondered why they were different from his own and discovered that they buttoned instead of lacing. There were seven buttons on the right leg and only six on the left. This worried him and he bent his brows trying to reason it out. The noise of firing had ceased to mean a battle; it had become merely a sort of Thing which dominated all else but did not have to be taken into account.

He could not see how the man with the mismatched leggings walked so fast. His own strides, he knew, shortened at every step; they must, with the pain in his foot and leg becoming sharper all the time. And

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yet in some inscrutable fashion he managed to keep his place. He wanted to pitch his blanket-roll into the ditch, but kept it on for some reason which he was too tired to analyze; he only knew that he had to keep it because Brown had said so. Of course they would go back that night to the field where he had slept the night before—after they had fought the battle. He could not see the use in carrying his tent and blankets with him when he would only have to carry them back again.

With a sudden start he realized that the column had halted. Men on all sides of him were easing buckles and straps, tightening shoe-laces and squaring themselves away for more miles. Pendleton rested the stock of his rifle on the ground and raised his lame leg into the air like a dog. He felt that he would care for nothing else if only he might stand perfectly still for the rest of his life. There was a small cherry tree near the fence with a grateful patch of shade beneath it, where the grass grew thick and green. In the center of the patch of grass was a trampled depression where something had lain. Pendleton knew that he would fit exactly into the depression; there was a forked branch against which he could lean his rifle; he would go to sleep instantly.

The man with the leggings that buttoned began suddenly to go ahead down the road. Pendleton was delighted; the regiment was going to move off and leave him to sleep under the cherry tree.

"Here, kid, don't go to sleep standing up!" Brown said roughly.

Pendleton roused himself, and the incessant plodding commenced again. Dust, blanket-roll, bayonet-sheath and galling foot had been merged into one nightmare-like oppression which weighed down on him. The separate details of his torture lost their individuality. He passed into a state of semi-unconsciousness. The only part of him that seemed alive was whatever brain-cells prompted him to put one foot in front of the other and then drag the second wearily past it. He was roused by bumping violently into the man with the buttoned leggings and finding that they had halted again.

"Gosh," exclaimed the man, glaring angrily over his shoulder, "you must be a darned sight more anxious to walk than I am!"

This time the regiment stood stock still in the middle of the road for half an hour. The men were allowed to sit down, and the roadside became dotted with brown figures and brown guns, sprawled out in the grass. Officers stood in knots talking and listening to the sounds of battle. Pendleton came back to a normal state of consciousness. He listened intently to the roar of battle. It sounded exactly as it had the last time he had paid attention to it, only that it seemed to come from all sides at once, and the sharper, rattling sound was louder now, fairly drowning out the deeper booming of the artillery.

He looked at the men about him, stretched out in postures designed to give the greatest amount of perfect rest in a short time. They did not look very imposing or very military. The only uniformity about them was the brown trousers and the white streaks of the blanket-rolls—and even these varied in degree of dirtiness. Some of them wore blue shirts, others brown, and it seemed as though every hat was cocked at a different angle. All of them were powdered a dirty white with the dust; they looked more like laborers than soldiers.

A couple of officers came and leaned against the fence near where Pendleton lay. They were different! Their leather puttees glistened neatly through the sun, their trim jackets set squarely and their trousers narrowed fashionably at the knees. One of them was dark and the other light; both wore slim, closely trimmed mustaches and were carefully shaved. Pendleton gloated over their appearance. They were listening intently to the firing.

"It isn't working any farther to the north," said the light-haired man. "That's a comfort."

"And it won't, either," said the dark one. "We've had too much artillery for 'em."

They climbed to the top of the rail fence and rolled cigarettes.

"It wouldn't surprise me if old Hecker'd try to use the cavalry," commented the blonde officer. "He's got a weakness for horses—and those scarlet trousers would look beautiful in a charge."

"I'd like to see it," admitted the other; "but they'd get cut up."

"Oh, they'd get bucketted!" announced the first one. Then a fat captain appeared near them, and they threw away their cigarettes, slid off the fence and disappeared.

From the head of the column an order rolled from captain to sergeant and from

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captain to sergeant down the long column, and the men grumblingly scrambled back into line. As they did so, the sound of frantically rapid hoof-beats sounded on the hard road in the distance, clicking sharply through the rumbling overtone of firing. There was something dramatic about the sound which reached even the dusty, sweating column. Even Brown looked interested. There was a cross-road a hundred feet ahead of the spot where Pendleton stood, and down it a solitary horseman came, galloping madly. Pendleton caught a fleeting but clean-cut picture of him as he swept around the corner. Scarlet trousers and blue coat had been reduced to the same shade by the powdering dust. His shako had fallen back, held on only by the chin-strap; his face was white, the pallor gleaming through the sweat and dirt on his face. Pendleton could even see the quid of tobacco under the flesh of the man's cheek. The horseman drove his mount straight at a group of officers, then hauled the beast up on his haunches, saluted stiffly and handed something to an officer.

The column shook from end to end. Officers turned toward their companies and bawled at them.

"Forward—double quick!" yelled a sergeant near Pendleton.

"Now, kid," warned Brown, "you'll learn what hikin' really is!"

For fifty yards Pendleton ran on his toes as he had once been taught to do, and it was easier on his feet. He was exhilarated at the prospect; he could forget the plodding, choking miles because now they were actually going into battle. The orderly on the fiery horse had meant war—real, red war with banging guns and rushing columns! After all, he thought, the marching was a necessary preparation. The dusty miles behind him became haloed with a glamour that they had lacked. He might even see that splendid blue-and-scarlet horde of lancers racing across the rolling meadows toward hostile infantry—the blonde officer had almost promised it! Again the creeping shudders of anticipation went up his spine. The sight of a big field-hospital in a meadow at the roadside did not frighten him. There were few weak centers in Pendleton's nervous-system; physical terror had always been very far away from him.

But fifty yards at the "double" set the perspiration streaming down his face, and the dust flew in still thicker clouds under the flying feet of the column. Pendleton found that he could no longer run on his toes as he wished to do; the weight of his accouterments told on him. He began to pant heavily. His rifle, swinging by its sling-strap from his shoulder, bobbed about crazily, and his bayonet-sheath battered his thigh worse than before. He came down flat-footed now, and the throbbing pain in his foot came back with ever-increasing sharpness.

"How d'ye like this?" demanded Brown, glancing sideways at the other's reddening face.

"Can't stand much of it!" gasped Pendleton, clutching his flapping canteen with one hand. He tried to think how far troops were supposed to move at the "double" and to estimate how far he had run already. He glanced back over his shoulder and saw a red barn which he knew was near the place they had halted. He had not run half a mile and the regiment gave no sign of pausing! He stumbled and looked down at his feet; one of his shoes had come unlaced. At every step it grew worse, slipping painfully over his already tender heel. Yet he knew that if he stopped to fix it the company would be far ahead of him and he would have to spurt to catch them. He was running as well as he could now; he would never be able to go faster. Why was it *his* shoe that had come untied? Surely he must be more tired than any one else; the other men about him ran as though they liked it. He trod on the flying lace and lurched against the man in front of him.

He sprawled out of line and bent over his shoe. The blood surged to his head and everything swam before his eyes. He could hear the fierce pounding of his heart above the roar of firing and the banging feet of the regiment as it went by. His fingers felt unnaturally large as he fumbled for the lace. Frantically he tied the string into a knot which he knew he could never untie, and stumbled to his feet. His own company was a hundred yards in front of him. The other men filled the road, and Pendleton had to run in the ditch. The ground was uneven, full of sticks and stones, and frequently he was forced to leap stumps or crash through low bushes.

"Ain't the road good 'nuff for ye?" demanded a red-haired corporal.

Pendleton had no wind to reply. He

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staggered on through the ditch, gaining slowly and painfully on the bobbing white mark he knew was Brown's blanket-roll. With the breath whisking through his dry lips he fell into his place and ran on. He did not know what had happened; he was simply conscious that in spite of pain and everything else he could run, stiffly and mechanically. The saving "second-wind" had caught him in time and one straggler had been saved.

The regiment had left the road and started crossing a broad, open field. The ground was uneven, but it was not so bad as the ditch had been, and there was no dust. Frantic officers began deploying the thick column as it sped, and the long line opened out fanwise across the fields. The roar of battle sounded much closer. Pendleton raised his eyes, and along the crest of a line of low hills in front of him he saw moving dots of men, and larger, darker bulks which every now and then disappeared in puffs of hazy smoke. The regiment's battery was in action.

"Faster, men, faster!" called a voice in Pendleton's ear. He looked around and saw the blonde lieutenant running at his side, his eyes fixed on the distant battery. This was the man who had promised real war! Pendleton felt that he would run anywhere and increased his speed. Things were humming in the air over his head—high above, and he realized in a dim way that somebody was firing at them!

A hoarse order sounded, and the regiment —spread out now in a long line that lost itself in the rolling hollows on both sides—stopped and began throwing off blanket-rolls and belts. The ground became littered with little white piles as far as Pendleton could see. He stood blinking in the sunlight, wondering what had happened. He could see the battery more distinctly now, and could clearly make out the limbers, gun-teams and ammunition-wagons in the dip back of the hill.

"Get under guard!" yelled the light-haired lieutenant. "And dig like blazes!"

Pendleton tugged at his intrenching-tool and stood holding it helplessly. Acres of ground stretched around him on all sides, and he was ordered to dig with a tool not much larger than a cooking-spoon! He felt silly. Then he saw Brown down on his knees, making the dirt fly like an excited terrier. He followed suit blindly, throwing the dirt in all directions, carving a senseless, round hole in the earth before him.

"What in thunder's the matter with you?" demanded Brown. "Pile the stuff in front of you! D'ye think y're drivin' a well?"

The ground was hard and dry from a long, hot drought. The field was full of stones, and the handle of the intrenching-tool slipped and slid in Pendleton's sweating hands. The sun beat down mercilessly, and the still air shimmered and quivered in the heat. But along as much of the regiment's front as he could see Pendleton watched the line of fresh, yellow-brown earth pile up. He felt that it was remarkable.

"Great!" he heard the lieutenant say. "They're moles—regular moles!"

Presently, Pendleton was sure, a fierce, yelling enemy, clad in some sort of outrageously fierce-looking uniform would sweep the battery from the hill in front and come clashing down on the line of trenches. He must hurry! He lunged at the tough earth savagely, wiping the sweat out of his eyes with a grimy hand. After a time his arms began to feel as his legs felt, and his lunges at the earth grew less fierce. Brown's voice sounded in his ear.

"Crawl in, kid. That's enough. We ain't buildin' no permanent fortifications!"

Willingly he slid into the hollow behind the little wall of earth he had raised, pulled his blanket-roll closer to him, and laid his rifle within easy reach.

"Hadn't I better load it?" he queried, but Brown was already busy trying to clean the clogged stem of his pipe with a blade of grass, and did not answer. Pendleton decided to act without orders, and shoved a clip of cartridges into the greasy magazine of his rifle, patting the yellow tubes admiringly as he did so.

He waited tensely for several minutes for the yelling masses of strange infantry to come over the brow of the hill, but they did not come. The gunners of the battery went about their duties with the same rapid deftness, and the six guns of the battery rent the air with their explosions at regular intervals. The din in the air about him grew neither more nor less. He could hear Brown grumbling beside him.

"Now, darn it all," exclaimed the veteran, "I've went and busted that grass off in there an' I never will get a smoke!"

Pendleton could see the other men in the

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long line lying behind the bare trenches, and every little way a faint blue haze showed where some man had found matches and tobacco. Pendleton felt a sense of deep personal disappointment, but the light-haired lieutenant did something to restore his interest by saying in businesslike tones:

"Better keep your cartridges handy and leave the chambers open, men."

Pendleton shaded his eyes from the glaring sun and let his bared elbows rest in the hot earth. The relief of easing his legs and arms was enormous. They ached terribly, but he felt that he could stand it so long as he did not have to move them. The sun, beating down vertically on the crown of his hat, made him feel drowsy; the steady hammering of many guns became a droning that did not disturb him. Dimly he heard Brown's grunt of satisfaction and heard him blowing joyfully through the stem of his rescued pipe. In a hazy way the odor of Brown's tobacco aroused in him a lazy desire to smoke—and he woke with a start as his forehead bumped the sharp front-sight of his rifle. He shook himself, changed his position and looked around.

"I could eat that rooster o' the cook's right now," announced Brown between puffs.

Around the end of the hill on which the battery stood came a little clump of horsemen. Another group straggled in their tracks, and then another still larger. The stream became steady, and the infantry in their trenches sat up to watch. The blonde officer whistled sharply through his teeth. The stream of cavalry moved slowly down the road which the regiment had left. Many of the infantrymen stood up to watch, Pendleton among them. The cavalry were moving at a walk, the horses' heads hanging, the men's hands slack on the bridles. As they came nearer he could see that the pennons of the lances were torn, the shafts splintered, the shakos were all awry, and the gay uniforms were in slovenly-looking disorder. Many of the men wore white bandages, which showed clean in the distances but were blotched with ugly red on closer inspection. Some of the horses carried empty saddles, and not a few had limp figures hanging pathetically across them.

"Old Hecker *would* use 'em!" muttered the lieutenant. "He would do it!"

The cavalry passed out of sight, and the men dropped back into the hot trenches. They grew tired of watching the ceaseless activity of the gunners on the distant hills, and Pendleton sighed with relief when the guns limbered up and disappeared. He had given up waiting for the strange infantry, and was concerned solely with finding a position in which he could sleep without making his leg grow numb. It grew hotter, and swarms of insects hummed and purred around the men's heads. Pendleton fought them with both hands and finally aided Brown in building a smudge of wet paper on the ground between them. A while later he was roused forcibly from a doze by discovering that he was lying across the entrance to a village of red ants.

The sun's rays were slanting on to the back of his neck when Pendleton became aware of movements around him and a confused shouting. He stumbled to his feet with dim hopes of seeing running figures coming down the slope toward him, but found that the regiment was rising from its trenches and closing again into a compact column.

"Have we got to walk some more?" he demanded of no one in particular.

They did walk. The regiment toiled up the slope and crossed the ground where the battery had stood, climbing over a litter of shell-cases, empty boxes, bits of broken harness and scraps of clothing. It looked to Pendleton like the ground where a circus tent had been pitched. They crossed a succession of hot, parched fields, and once waded in an oasis of a brook, where the men were loathe to drag their hot feet from the cold water. Along a roadside ditch they found the ground glittering with empty shells, and a huddle of still figures in brown uniforms. Pendleton looked at these with interest. He could not see that they differed much from other dead men; war lent no dignity to the slain, apparently. They resembled men that he had seen taken from a wrecked freight-train, save that there was less blood about these figures.

Finally the tired regiment came to a long, dusty road, stretching hot and yellow before them. They fell again into the stride of the morning, trying to ease the burdens on their lamed shoulders. Pendleton found that the long hours in the hot trenches had stiffened his muscles without resting them in the least. For a time he was interested in the dead men in the fields, the distant columns moving along green hillsides, and the

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diminishing racket of the battle. Once he raised his head to watch a column of the bright horsemen, but it only started him thinking of the beaten cavalry he had seen crawl brokenly around the spur of the hill.

It began to grow somewhat cooler and a slight breeze came up from somewhere. The sounds of firing seemed moving farther and farther toward the east. The men took off their hats and let the breeze blow through their hair, matted thick with sweat and dust. Pendleton was limping with both legs now and considering the throwing away of all his accouterments in all seriousness. Only the knowledge that there was food in his blanket-roll and that sometime in the dim future there might be a chance to eat it made him keep it on his shoulder.

The motion of his legs became a thing quite apart from the rest of him. They went ahead, aching and throbbing at every step, but he was able to pay no attention to them. His mind was too tired to work. He fixed his eyes on the small of the brown back in front of him and walked stolidly ahead. The regiment had to move into the ditch to let a battery go by, and Brown had to pull Pendleton into the grass after him.

During a momentary halt, while the officer studied many-colored, big-scale maps, he saw the two lieutenants he had noticed in the morning talking together.

"I'll tell you," the light-haired man said earnestly, "it was a bit ticklish there for about half an hour. They'd have tied us in a ghastly knot if we hadn't scared 'em off with our regiment. After they'd cut up the cavalry they were coming pretty fast for the guns and we got there just in time. I tell you, it was this little regiment that turned the trick, Jimmy!"

Pendleton plodded on into the twilight. This man had tried to say that their regiment had won the battle. Pendleton would have liked to ask him how. By marching itself black in the face, digging a useless ditch and then marching itself pale again?

He was only dimly conscious when they left the road and went through a fence into the shelter of timber. He helped Brown pitch the tiny shelter-tent, knowing only that he felt a tremendous relief in freeing his shoulders of their share of the weight. Half an hour later a dozen of them sat stupidly around a fire which was performing the double task of boiling coffee and thinning out the visible supply of mosquitoes. A soldier, with a rag tied around his arm, came through the trees, trailing his rifle behind him. The one thing about him which Pendleton noticed was that most of the loops in his cartridge belt were empty, and that there was a dark ring around the muzzle of his gun.

"Lost my company," explained the man, dropping into the circle about the fire, "and I'm too tired to find it. Fightin's hard work. Can I have some o' yer grub?"

They made him drowsily welcome and the smoke from his pipe joined theirs.

"I tell ye what," he began, "that was somethin' of a fight. You fellers don't know nothin' about it yet. Wait 'till ye'er shelled onct! Say, every time one o' them things goes off ye jump nigh out o' yer clothes!"

Pendleton shook himself fully awake.

"Nuts!" he said in deep scorn, "this regiment won the battle! You've been merely shooting at something while we've been doing the fighting. You don't know anything about war; we do! Brown, is there any way of putting on your socks so they won't wrinkle?"

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WHEN I WAS KING OF BOTEL-TABAGO

by WALTER J. KINGSLEY

EDITOR'S NOTE.—For years there was quasi-recognition, by the Powers, of King Burke, a beach-comber who set up an independent state in the China Sea. In modern history this is the only instance of such an arbitrary political establishment save the one that is hereafter narrated. The author is now in New York City, in private business, and leading a peaceful life, though within the past ten years he has had adventures innumerable in various parts of the world. The Botel-Tabago affair was his greatest, as it assumed for a time a very serious nature, having developed into an international incident at a critical time in the East. As secret-service agent for foreign governments, news and diplomatic correspondent for various newspapers and governments, and advance agent for exploration and development companies, Mr. Kingsley would in the natural course of his career encounter some very interesting experiences; but that he should become an Oriental king is, to say the least, amazing, and merely shows to what extent the true adventurer will go.

IN THE days at Albany when the Governor's staff was clad in uniforms justly famous for their gorgeousness, Norman Mack, the noted Democratic leader, was one of the wearers of the uniform as an officer on the staff of Governor David B. Hill. As the years passed by and Mr. Mack's figure amplified the clothes grew too small. I was living in Buffalo then and knew Mr. Mack very well. One night, more as a joke than anything else, he gave me the gorgeous outfit. It was a wonder to behold with its masses of gold braid, and something elemental in my nature gave birth to a wild and lasting desire to wear that splendor. I dreamed of donning it with some real public reason for so doing. Eventually I attained my ambition, but I had to become a king to do so—the ruler of an unattached group of islands in the Pacific, and to combat the Japanese, English and Russian Governments to maintain my royal dignity,—which was all a very queer thing for a free born American to do.

To-day it is a joke. Seven years ago the day this is written it was a very serious matter for all concerned; a serious matter with a very funny side. I shall assume the narrator's prerogative of leaving out the names of a few gentlemen whose present official connections would not allow me the liberty of relating their former doings. One was then an American State Department official and is now high in the councils of his Government. Two others were the commanders of foreign war vessels, and yet another is a Wall Street man of the very highest standing. What is a new king good for if his domain has not some valuable commercial or strategic point in it?

My late kingdom and my grief-stricken former subjects are located in the northwest corner of Micronesia, east of Formosa and south of the Riu-kiu Islands. The general character of the islands is that of extinct volcanic craters that have thrust their tops above the blue waters of the Pacific and around which the coral formation of centuries has created a set of reefs that are a peril of the first magnitude to any large vessel. The usual vegetation of that latitude is found there, and the sea about, notably in the channels between the islands, teems with fish, so that the inhabitants are in no danger of starvation. In time I might have been able to introduce steak and chops into the insular cuisine but I have serious doubts if to date any Botel-Tabagonian who has not traveled from his own fireside into the wide world has ever seen a cutlet or even heard of one.

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I did not have time to establish my census bureau any farther than picking out my Secretary of the Interior, so that I am unable to state the exact number of people on the islands. As a rough guess I am proud to say they would total between one and two thousand. Racially, they are descendants of the aboriginal hairy Ainos, and, with a tenacity that promised well for their loyalty to my regime, they have clung to the good old ways of their progenitors in the matter of a serene disregard for conventional attire and a predilection for eating with their fingers food cooked on a hot flat stone. Also, they are sadly prone to sudden action in moments of wrath and have often been known to poke spears through visitors after carving them up with a variety of the crook-bladed *kris*.

Previous to my elevation to the throne I was the editor of a paper, the *Daily Advertiser*, conducted in Yokohama by a Mr. Knapp of Boston, and went in behalf of my paper on what was more or less of a junketing trip to the islands. The whaler *Benjamin Sewall* had been wrecked there and the crew had endured frightful hardships before news of their situation reached the outside world. Then a British warship was ordered from the Yokohama station to go in search of them. Leaving in haste, I jammed a few things into a bag that already contained the amazing gold braided uniform.

We located the islands easily and, as it was the season of the trade winds, anchored in the lee of the principal one, sheltered on three sides, and made a landing in boats. The castaways were overjoyed at their rescue. The vessel on which we had come being in no haste to return and the officers wishing to verify the navigation-chart soundings, we had abundant opportunity for looking about, and the thing that struck me forcibly was that there was no political organization in the archipelago, no authority, no apparent sovereignty, and even the oldest and wisest Botel-Tabagonian had not the remotest conception of whether they were an independent semi-anarchistic state or were being protected by some one of the Powers. It looked to me as if it were open season for kingdoms in that region and I began talking the matter over with one of my friends among the officers.

One evening we had a quiet excursion ashore and I carried the uniform with me. I put it on in the bush and appeared in some state and dignity before a group of the leading citizens gathered around a fire. I broached the subject of my taking over their rule and found them nowise averse; in fact the foregleam of coming splendor they got from that uniform was extremely alluring and they persuaded me to assume the ermine then and there.

It was arranged that after I had my kingdom established my companion was to resign his commission and take command of my navy. The upshot of the conference was a formal proclamation to be published just after we sailed away, that I would return shortly, prepared to take, hold, defend, finance, develop and in all ways justly and lawfully govern the newly created Kingdom of Botel-Tabago. It would take some time to prepare a constitution and more to explain it to them, but I could not think of assuming an absolute despotism over them.

The matter was kept quiet aboard ship and I was half inclined to give up being a king until after I had been in Yokohama a few days and had had a talk with a man of the name of Morris, or at least so I will call him. He is now dead, but at that time he was one of the powers in that Monte Carlo of the Orient, Portuguese Macao, and so terrific had been the gambling going on there and so serious had been the spread of poker, craps and so on among the Orientals, to the displacement of native games, that it looked as if Macao would soon see its last day as one of the world's great gambling resorts. The gamblers must move somewhere or disperse and the independent kingdom of Botel-Tabago would be a most excellent place to which to transfer their activities.

In my dreams I began to see a revenue to the state and incidentally to the wise and just ruler of the same, of like nature to that which pours into the coffers of the Prince of Monaco. In a short time it was duly arranged that a large syndicate of Oriental gamblers should finance the establishment of the kingdom, and I got the gold-braided raiment out where I could see it all the time and privately had my head measurements taken for a modest but artistic crown.

In Yokohama, when I returned, was a member of a great New York financial firm on a tour around the world, and when the establishment of my kingdom was being

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freely talked about in the Oriental papers he sent his secretary to see me. After a series of conferences it was decided that if I succeeded in holding on to the kingdom of Botel-Tabago for two years' time he would guarantee that a site would be taken over by the United States Government as a coaling-station and that I should receive a cool million for my adventure.

As I now look back on the affair I am surprised that the crowd of us associated did not endeavor to declare war on somebody or try to send a deputation to The Hague forthwith. No one of the great Powers could have had a set of rulers who felt the weight of their responsibilities more, and the only limit to our ambitions was the fact that there was not a thing on the islands that could have been marketed for five dollars for the world's consumption.

Nevertheless we went busily on preparing to establish a line of steamships, or at least make the islands a port of call for something besides junks, whalers and tramps seeking green food and fresh water. We had even selected the site of the casinos that were to be built by the gambling syndicate and in our rosy dream we saw a little city with asphalted streets on the west shore. I was looking around for suitable teachers who understood the islanders' speech, to teach them English and open the public schools.

The United States had ordered from a Japanese ship-building firm at Uraga some seventeen or eighteen shallow-draft gunboats for use in the Philippines, and the gunboats had been built, passed by inspecting naval constructors and then the Government discovered that the men who had passed the boats were drawing more pay from the ship-building firm than they were from Washington. The result was that several such were started for jail and there was a very fine shallow-draft navy offered for sale.

I had ordered some rather handsome royal stationery which read:

KINGSLEY I., KING OF BOTEL-TABAGO

and on this, after consulting my backers, I wrote to the firm at Uraga and made a bid for all the boats for the use of my nation. The entire amount involved was about $1,800,000, but that would have been forthcoming from two sources when the day of reckoning came.

Consuls, ministers, ambassadors and foreign ministries had been treating the matter lightly until this offer was made public. When it was plain that it was very likely that the boats would be bought, would be taken from Japan and would be used, then there was a gigantic stir. Cablegrams began to fly to London, St. Petersburg, Tokio and Washington, and the Powers were wondering what to do. It looked as if several dignified governments were about to be made to look very ridiculous. Still, no one of them wanted to be made ridiculous alone and my path continued clear.

I then inserted an advertisement calling for trained army and navy men, soldiers of fortune, to enlist in my army and navy. The East is full of men who are "ex" from every large army and navy of the world and I had a torrent of applications.

There was no question that there would be terrific pressure brought to bear from Americans resident or interested in the Orient and from the Pacific coast to have Washington come to my support if need be. Two or three important international lawyers gave interviews to the press in which the legal validity of my claims was sustained. No nation had ever exercised either discovery rights or protectorial rights so far as the islands were concerned. No one seemed to know to whom they belonged and the consequence was that it was plain that the people of the islands were entitled to select their own ruler and maintain their own government. So far as they were concerned I knew that I would be King of Botel-Tabago just as long as Norman Mack's gubernatorial staff uniform held out or till some man appeared in the islands with one more gorgeous.

Morris was wild to get the kingdom moving along at once and after consulting with some lawyer, a fugitive from justice in Macao, who told him that possession was nine points of the law, he said he could take no more chances till I returned to my kingdom or sent some able representative there to hold down the throne until I could get back and sit on it.

There was so much to do in the way of organization that I could not leave foreign soil and go home just then, and we picked out one of our number and sent him to Kalung whence he crossed in a sail-boat. He was instructed to take some live stock with him to begin the raising of a food

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supply at once, and some coolies to start civilized gardening.

It is just as well to say that he arrived with but one cow alive and that the first time she mooed after she got on shore the nation ran over to the other side of the island, brave men as they were, having never seen so large and fierce a thing as a cow.

Ah, those were busy days! Chartering a small vessel to take the court and the royal retinue to Botel-Tabago, buying fireworks for the coronation ceremony, revising specifications for the armament of the navy and the munitions for the army, signing commissions of officers of both, conferring with the officers of cable companies to get the best bid for a concession to land a cable spur, seeing artists who wished to design the currency, trying to pick out a motto for my dynasty, settling the quarrels among three rival missionaries who wished to establish each his own religion, and making secret trips to consult with the big men who were behind me!

I had opened a consul-general's office in Yokohama and was making it my headquarters during my stay in Japan, and one morning, as I was giving an audience to a Vermont Democrat, far from home, who wanted to become a naturalized citizen, the court chamberlain brought in the card of Baron——, an official of the Japanese Foreign Office.

I realized that the straits were narrowing and, going behind the door, donned my royal apparel and had the visitor shown in.

With an unfailing smile, that my sternest front could not disconcert, he informed me that his Government had taken careful cognizance of my honorable pretendership and begged to inform me that it could not permit me to return to my kingdom and assume the rule thereof and requested me to abdicate.

I declined and asked what the grounds were for the request on the part of his Government.

He produced a copy of the articles of convention of the treaty of peace that terminated the war between China and Japan as the high contending parties, by which Japan acquired various territories and islands which I shall not trouble to mention, and he asserted that these included Botel-Tabago.

I pointed out to him that no specific mention was made of the islands and that by all the usages of international law he was not dealing with a pretender but with a royal potentate chosen by the people of the realm in dispute.

He could not see it in that way and again asked for my abdication. I regret to say that most of my cabinet had gone out the back door or found their ministerial duties calling them elsewhere so that they were not present to witness the historic scene in which I defied the oppressor of my small but beautiful land.

The Baron, with a smile that was almost tearful, produced a warrant for my arrest and, using one of my own court functionaries as a messenger, sent for the police to assist him in escorting me to the station and thence to Tokio.

This was really too bad, as in two days we should have sailed for Botel-Tabago and in all truth and sincerity it might have made some difference in the history of the world.

Japan and Russia were preparing for their great struggle. No one believed that it could be averted. All the nations were on the verge of an attack of nerves. If, for instance, as Great Britain was allied with Japan, Germany was on the fence and France was allied with Russia, and the United States was seeking to conserve her own interests, some diplomatic official of France had given my kingdom an official endorsement, the Russian-Japanese war might never have occurred, through the fear of the Powers that others would be drawn into it, or it might have forced others into the conflict. It was the very time for an aspiring American to pick up a small kingdom in those waters and be allowed to get away with it.

I do not wish to betray any confidences, as I said in the beginning, and I will not say what steps were taken to give me support in this my hour of trial, but the thing went round and round the world in diplomatic cable cipher, with an expenditure and excitement that were enormous.

Meanwhile I was haled to Tokio and was a prisoner though shown every courtesy and some rather amusing honors. When we arrived there I was taken before Count Komura, the famous Japanese statesman, then the Minister of Foreign Affairs, and he, after regretting that the situation was such that I could not be presented to the Em-

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peror as a visitor of royal rank, again requested my abdication. Once more I declined and we went over the same ground as I had with the Baron who had brought me from Yokohama.

When we came to the point of the failure of the articles of convention to specify the sovereignty of Botel-Tabago the Count smiled indulgently and produced the original papers in which he pointed to one little character written there. In Japanese it is very like one finger crooked a little and two fingers crossed over it. The meaning is very similar to "&" as a sign for "*et cetera.*" It is much stronger and more elastic, however, It *did* cover Botel-Tabago unless the Chinese Government was willing to make an issue of the matter and say it did not. Count Komura said that Japan was willing to defend her claim against any and all contenders. Even the United States was willing to forego any interest in the matter either on its own behalf or on the behalf of me and my friends. If I doubted this, Count Komura begged me to read some telegrams which were addressed to me and which he regretted that he had been unable to give me sooner, after having intercepted them.

There was one from Morris to say that the American Minister to Japan had been instructed to do nothing, and the other was from the man we had sent from Kalung. He was back at Kalung and wired me that he had held the throne down as long as he could without a uniform but had failed and would I get him a ticket to Yokohama.

Of course there is nothing more touching than Macaulay's interpretation of the mind of Charles I. as he went to the block, and the scene of which Richelieu was the center, as power and all things slipped through his thin yellow fingers, is one of the most pathetic in all history; but I never see the picture of Napoleon standing on the cliffs at St. Helena, gazing off to sea where lay the empire that once was his, but a lump comes in my throat and I think of the day that I slowly dipped my pen in that Japanese ink and wrote the first abdication of the first American king and perhaps the last.

I will get even yet.

THE RED RING

by

WILLIAM LE QUEUX

THE Usborne affair, though very remarkable and presenting many curious features, was never made public, for reasons which will quickly become apparent.

It occurred in this way. Just before eight o'clock one misty morning last Autumn Captain Richard Usborne, of the Royal Engineers, and myself were strolling together up and down the platform at Liverpool Street Station, awaiting the arrival of the Hook of Holland boat-train. We had our eyes well about us, for a man was coming to London in secret, and we members of the Secret Service were there to meet him, to examine his credentials and to pass

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him on to the proper quarter to be questioned and to receive payment—substantial payment—for his confidential information.

I had arranged the visit of the stranger through one of our secret agents, a German living in Berlin, but as I had never met the man about to arrive we had arranged that I should hold a pale-green envelope half concealed in my handkerchief raised to my nose, and that he should do the same.

"By Jove, Jerningham," Dick Usborne was saying, "this will be a splendid coup—the revelation of all that is going on in secret at Krupp's! The Department ought to make you a special grant for such a service. I hope, however," he added, glancing about him with some suspicion, "I hope none of our German friends have wind of this visit. If so it will fare badly with him when he gets back to Essen."

I had kept my eyes well about me and was satisfied that no secret agent of Germany was present.

A moment later the train drew into the station and amid the crowd I quickly distinguished a short, stout, middle-aged man of essentially Teutonic appearance, with a handkerchief to his face and in it an envelope exactly similar to my own.

Our greeting was hasty. Swiftly we put him into the taxi we had in readiness, and as we drove along he produced certain credentials, including a letter of introduction from my friend in Berlin.

Herr Gunther—which was the name by which we knew him—appeared extremely nervous lest his presence in London should be known. True, he was to receive for his information and for certain documents which he carried in his breast pocket two thousand pounds of Secret Service money, but he seemed well aware of the ruin which would befall him if the argus-eyed Government of Germany became aware of his association with us.

We had both witnessed such misgivings on the part of informants before. Therefore we repeated our assurances in German—for the stranger did not speak English, and at St. Clement Danes Church in the Strand I stopped the taxi and alighted, for Dick Usborne was to conduct our friend to the house of our chief, General Kennedy, in Curzon Street, it not being considered judicious for Gunther to be taken to the War Office.

The German was to return again by the Hook of Holland route at nine o'clock that same night, therefore he had brought no baggage. Secret visits of this character are always made swiftly. The British public are in blissful ignorance of how many foreigners come to our shores and tell us what we most desire to know—for a substantial consideration.

On the day in question I played golf at Sunningdale, for I had been some months abroad, living in a back street in Brest, as a matter of fact, and was now on leave at home. I dined at the golf-club, and about ten o'clock that night entered my rooms in Shaftesbury Avenue, where I found a telegram lying upon the table.

It had been despatched from the Brighton station at Victoria at 6.30, and read:

Am at Webster's Come to me at once
Can not come to you Dick

By this message I was greatly puzzled. Webster's was a small private hotel in Wilton Road, close to Victoria—a cheap, obscure little place in which I knew Usborne had sometimes hidden himself under the name of Mr. Clarke, for we are often compelled to assume fictitious names and also to keep queer company.

Why had he so suddenly gone into hiding? What had occurred?

At once I took a cab along Victoria Street and alighted before the house which was, to all purposes, a private one save for the lamp outside which stated it to be a hotel.

The black-bearded little manager whom I had met once before told me that my friend had arrived there at noon and taken a room, but that at two o'clock he had gone out and had not returned.

"And he left no message for me?" I asked.

"None, sir."

"Did he bring any luggage?"

"Mr. Clarke seldom brings any luggage," was the man's reply.

I was puzzled. If Dick wished to see me so urgently, he would surely have remained at the hotel. He was aware I was going out to golf, although I had not told him where I intended playing.

While we were speaking I saw a chambermaid pass, and then it occurred to me to suggest that my friend might have returned unobserved. He might even be awaiting me in his room. He had said that he was

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unable to come to me, which appeared that he feared to go forth lest he should be recognized. I knew that Dick Usborne, whose ingenuity and daring were unequaled by any in our service, was a marked man.

Both the manager and the chambermaid of that frowsy place expressed themselves confidant that Mr. Clarke had not returned, but at last I induced the girl to ascend to his room and ascertain.

From where I stood in the hall I heard her knock and then try the door. She rattled it, and called to him. By that I knew it was locked—on the inside.

Instantly I ran up the stairs and, banging at the door, called my comrade by name. But there was no response.

The key was still in the lock on the other side, so a few minutes later we burst open the door by force and rushed into the dark room.

The manager lighted the iron gas-jet, and by its light a startling sight was presented. Lying near the fireplace in a half-crouching position, face downward, was Dick Usborne! Quickly I turned him over and touched his face. The contact thrilled me. He was stone dead.

His eyes, still open, were glazed and stared horribly, his strong hands were clenched, his jaw had dropped, and it was plain by the contortion of the body that he had expired in agony.

Quickly suspicious of foul play, I made a rapid examination of the body. But I could find no wound or anything to account for death. A doctor, hastily summoned from round the corner in Vauxhall Bridge Road, was equally without any clue.

"Suicide, I should think," he exclaimed when he had finished his examination. "By poison, most probably, but there is no trace of it about the mouth."

Then, turning to the police-inspector who had just entered, he added:

"The door was locked on the inside. It must therefore have been suicide."

"The gentleman was a friend of yours, I believe, sir?" asked the inspector, addressing me.

I replied in the affirmative, but declared that he was certainly not the man to commit suicide.

"There's been foul play—of that I'm positive!" I declared emphatically.

"But he locked himself in," the hotel manager argued. "He must have reentered unobserved."

"He was waiting here for me. He wished to speak to me," I replied.

The theory held by all present, however, was that it was suicide, therefore the inspector expressed his intention of having the body conveyed to the Pimlico mortuary to await the usual post-mortem.

I then took him aside down-stairs and, telling him in confidence who I was and what office my dead friend held, I said:

"I must ask you, inspector, to lock up the room and leave everything undisturbed until I have made a few inquiries myself. The public must be allowed to believe it a case of suicide, but before we take any action I must consult my Chief. You, on your part, will please inform Superintendent Hutchinson of the C. I. Department at Scotland Yard that I am making investigations. That will be sufficient. He will understand."

"Very well, sir," replied the inspector, and a few moments later I left the house in a taxi and was soon seated with General Kennedy in his cozy little library in Curzon Street explaining briefly my startling discovery.

"That's most remarkable!" he cried, greatly upset at hearing of our poor colleague's death. "Captain Usborne brought the man Gunther here just after nine, and we had breakfast together. Then he left, promising to return at three to again take charge of the stranger. He arrived about a quarter past three, and both he and the German left in a four-wheeler. That is the last I saw of either of them."

"Gunther was to leave to-night on his return to Essen. Has he gone?" I asked.

"Who knows?" exclaimed the shrewd gray-headed little man.

"We must find him," I said. Then after a moment's reflection, I added: "I must go to Liverpool Street Station at once."

"I can not see what you can discover," replied the General. "If Gunther has left he would not be noticed in a crowded train. If he left London, he's already on the North Sea by this time," he added, glancing up at the clock.

"Usborne has been assassinated, sir," I declared with emphasis. "He was my best friend. We have often been in tight corners on the Continent together. May I be permitted to pursue the investigation myself?"

"By all means, if you really believe it was not a case of suicide."

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"It was not—of that I'm quite certain."

I was suspicious of Gunther. The German might have been an impostor after all. Yet at Webster's Dick had not been seen with any companion. He had simply gone there alone in order to wait for me.

For what reason? Aye, that was the question.

With all haste I drove down to Liverpool Street. On my way I took from my pocket a slip of paper—the receipt from a tourist-agency for the first-class return ticket between London and Essen which I had sent to Gunther. It bore the number of the German's ticket. At the inspector's office I was shown all the tickets collected from passengers departing by the boat-train, and among them found the German's voucher for the journey from Liverpool Street to Parkeston Quay.

I had at least cleared up one point. Herr Gunther had left London.

On returning to the dark little hotel in Wilton Road just after midnight I found a man I knew awaiting me—Detective Inspector Barker, who had been sent to me by Superintendent Hutchinson, the uniformed police having now been withdrawn from the house.

Alone, in the small sitting-room, we took counsel. Barker I knew to be a very clever investigator of crime, his specialty being the tracing and arrest of alien criminals who seek asylum in London and for whose extradition their own countries apply.

"I've seen the body of the unfortunate gentleman," he said. "But I can detect no suspicious circumstances. Indeed, for aught I can see, he might have locked himself in and died of natural causes. Have you any theory—of enemies, for example?"

"Enemies!" I cried. "Why, Dick Usborne was the most daring agent in our Service! It was he who discovered and exposed that clever German agent Schultz, who tried to secure the plan of the new *Dreadnought*. Only six months ago he cleared out a nest of German spies down at Beccles, and it was he who scented and discovered the secret store of German rifles and ammunition near Burnham-on-Crouch in Essex. But probably you know nothing of that. We've kept its discovery carefully to ourselves for fear of creating a panic. Dick, however, had a narrow escape. The night he broke into the cellars of the country inn where the depot had been established he was discovered by the landlord, a Belgian. The latter secured him with a rope, with a view to handing him over next day to the tender mercies of three Germans who lived at Maldon. But Dick succeeded in snatching up the Belgian's revolver and firing a shot which broke the blackguard's arm, and so escaped. Such a man is bound to have enemies—and vengeful ones, too," I added.

The mystery was full of puzzling features. The facts known were these: At noon Dick had arrived at that place and under the name of Mr. Clarke had taken a room. Just after three o'clock he had been at Curzon Street, but after that hour nothing more had been seen of him until we had found him dead.

The chief points were, first, the reason he had so suddenly gone into hiding, and, second, why he feared to come round to my rooms, although he desired to consult me.

Sending Barker across to Victoria Station to despatch a telegram, I ascended alone to the dead man's room and, turning up the gas, made a minute investigation. Some torn paper was in the fireplace—a telegraph-form. This I pieced together and in surprise found it to be a draft in pencil of the telegram I had received—but it was not in Dick's handwriting.

I searched my dead friend's pockets, but there was nothing in them of any use as clue. Men of my profession are usually very careful never to carry anything which may reveal their identity. I carefully examined even the body of Dick himself. But I confess that I could form no theory whatever as to how he had been done to death or by what means the assassin had entered or left the room.

While bending over my dead friend I thought I detected a sweet perfume, and taking out his handkerchief placed it to my nostrils. The scent was a subtle and delightful one that I never remembered having smelt before—like the fragrant odor of a cottage garden on a Summer's night. But Dick was something of a dandy, therefore it was not surprising that he should use the latest fashionable perfume.

As I gazed again upon the poor white face I noticed for the first time that upon the cheek, just below the left eye, was a slight but curious mark upon the flesh, a faint but complete red circle, perhaps a little larger than a finger ring, while outside it, at equal distances, showed four tiny spots. All was

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so very faint and indistinct that I had hitherto overlooked it. But now, as I struck a vesta and held it close to the dead, white countenance, I realized the existence of something which considerably increased the mystery.

When Barker returned I pointed it out, but he could form no theory of why it showed there. So I took a piece of paper from my pocket and, carefully measuring the diameter of the curious mark, drew a diagram of it, together with the four spots.

Barker and I remained there together the greater part of the night, but without gaining anything to assist toward a solution of the mystery. The servants could tell us absolutely nothing. Therefore we decided to wait until the post-mortem had been made.

This was done on the following day and when we interviewed the two medical men who made it, and Professor Sharpe, analyst to the Home Office, who had been present, the latter said:

"Well, gentlemen, the cause of death is still a complete mystery. Certain features induce us to suspect some vegetable poison, but whether self-administered we can not tell. The greater number of vegetable poisons, when diffused through the body, are beyond the reach of chemical analysis. If an extract, or inspissated juice, be administered, or if the poison were in the form of infusion, tincture or decoction, a chemical analysis would be of no avail. I am about to make an analysis, however, and will inform you of its result."

I made inquiry regarding the curious ring-like mark upon the cheek, but one of the doctors, in reply, answered: "It was not present to-day. It has disappeared."

So the enigma remained as complete as ever.

Next day I traveled over to Essen and there met Herr Gunther by appointment at the Rheinischer Hof. From his manner I knew at once that he was innocent of any connection with the strange affair. I had indeed made inquiry and ascertained that he was no impostor, but one of the chief foremen at Krupp's Cast Steel Works, that vast establishment which supplies several of the great Powers of Europe with cannon.

When I told him of the strange occurrence in London he stood dumbfounded.

"The Captain called for me at Curzon Street," he said in German, "and we drove in a cab to his club, in Pall Mall, I think he said it was. We had a smoke there, and then, just at dusk, he said he had a call to make, so we took a taxi-cab and drove a long way, across a bridge—over the Thames, I suppose it was.

"Presently we pulled up at the corner of a narrow street in a poor quarter and he alighted, telling me that he would be absent only ten minutes or so. I waited, but though one hour passed, he did not return. For two whole hours I waited, then, as he did not come back and I feared I should lose my train, I told the driver to go to Liverpool Street. He understood me, but he charged me eighteen marks for the fare."

"And you did not see the Captain again?"

"No. I had something to eat at the buffet and left for Germany."

"Nothing happened while you were with the Captain?" I asked. "I mean nothing which, in the light of what has occurred, might be considered suspicious?"

"Nothing whatever," was the German's reply. "He met nobody while with me. The only curious fact was the appointment he kept, and his non-return."

In vain I tried to learn into what suburb of London he had been taken; therefore that same night I again left for London via Brussels and Ostend.

Next day I called upon Professor Sharpe in Wimpole Street to ascertain the result of his analysis.

"I'm sorry to say that I've been unable to detect anything. If the Captain really died of poison it may have been one of those alkaloids some of which our chemical processes can not discover in the body. It is a common fallacy that all poisons can be traced. Some of them admit of no known means of detection. A few slices of the root of the *œnanthe crocata*, for instance, will destroy life in an hour, yet no poison of any kind has been separated from this plant. The same may be said of the African ordeal bean, and of the decoction and infusion of the bark of laburnum."

"Then you are without theory—eh?"

"Entirely, Mr. Jerningham. As regards poisoning, I may have been misled by appearances, yet my colleagues at the post-mortem could find nothing to indicate death from natural causes. It is as extraordinary, in fact, as all the other circumstances."

I left the house in despair. All Barker's

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efforts to assist me had been without avail, and now that a week had passed, and my dead friend had been interred at Woking, I felt all further effort to be useless.

Perhaps, after all, I had jumped to the conclusion of foul play too quickly. I knew that I alone held this theory. Our Chief was strongly of opinion that it was a case of suicide in a fit of depression, to which all of us who live at great pressure are frequently liable.

Yet when I recollected the strong character of poor Dick Usborne, and the many threats he had received during his adventurous career, I doggedly adhered to my first opinion.

Day after day, and with infinite care, I considered each secret agent of Germany likely to revenge himself upon the man who, more than any one else, had been instrumental in combating the efforts of spies upon our eastern coast. There were several men I suspected, but against no one of them was there any shadow of evidence.

That circular mark upon the cheek was, to say the least, a very peculiar feature. Besides, who had drafted that telegram which had brought me to Wilton Road?

Of the manager at Webster's I learned that Mr. Clarke had for some months past been in the habit of meeting there a young Frenchman named Dupont engaged in a merchant's office in the city. At our headquarters I searched the file of names and addresses of our "friends," but his was not among them. I therefore contrived after several weeks of patient watching to make the acquaintance of the young man, who lived in lodgings in Brook Green Road, Hammersmith, but after considerable observation, my suspicions were dispelled. The reason of his meeting with Dick was, no doubt, to give information, but of what nature I could not surmise. From Dupont's employers I learned that he was in Brussels on business for the firm on the day of the crime.

There had apparently been some motive in trying to entice me to that obscure hotel earlier in the evening of the tragedy. Personally I did not now believe that Dick had sent me that telegram. Its despatch had been part of the conspiracy which had terminated so fatally.

Nearly nine months went by. On more than one occasion the Chief had referred to poor Dick's mysterious end, expressing a strong belief that my suspicions were unfounded. Yet my opinion remained unchanged. Usborne had, I felt certain, been done to death by one who was a veritable artist in crime.

The mystery would no doubt have remained a mystery until this day had it not been for an incident which occurred about three months ago.

I had been sent to Paris to meet, on a certain evening, in the café of the Grand Hotel, a person who offered to sell us information which we were very anxious to obtain regarding military authority along the Franco-German frontier.

The person in question turned out to be a chic and smartly dressed Parisienne, the dark-haired wife of a French lieutenant of artillery stationed at Adun, close to the frontier. As we sat together at one of the little tables, she bent to me and in confidence whispered in French that at her apartment in the rue de Nantes she had a number of important documents relating to German military operations which her husband had secured and was anxious to dispose of. If I cared to accompany her I might inspect them.

The lady's apartment, on the third floor of a large house, proved to be quite a luxurious little place, furnished with great taste, and when she had ushered me into her little *salon*, she left me for a few moments. We were alone, she said, for it would not be wise for any one to know that she had sold information of such vital importance to England. Her husband would get into serious trouble for not placing it at the disposal of the French Ministry of War.

A few moments later she returned, having taken off her hat and coat, bearing a small black portfolio such as is used by business men in France. Seating me at a table and standing by my side, she placed the papers before me and I began a careful perusal.

I suppose I must have been thus occupied for some ten minutes, when slowly, very slowly, I felt her arm steal around my neck.

In an instant I sprang to my feet. The truth that I had all along suspected was now plain. Facing her, I cried:

"Woman! I know you! These documents are pure fabrications—prepared in order to entrap me here! I believed that I recognized you at first—now I am convinced!"

"Why, monsieur!" she exclaimed in a voice of reproach. "What do you mean?"

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"I mean, mademoiselle, that it was you—you, Julie Bellanger—who killed my friend Dick Usborne because he exposed you as a spy of Germany!" I cried.

"Killed your friend!" she gasped, trying to laugh. "You are mad, m'sieur!"

"Yes, you killed him! And shall I explain to you how you accomplished it?" I said, looking straight into her dark eyes. "Usborne had become friendly with you in Beccles, and you never suspected him in connection with the Secret Service. Among other things, he gave you a bottle of a new and extremely rare perfume which he had brought from Bucharest—that perfume which is now upon you. As soon as we met to-night I recognized its fragrance. Well, Usborne having convinced himself that you were engaged with others in gathering information in Suffolk for the General Staff in Berlin, informed the police and you were ordered away. You came to London and, determined upon a terrible revenge, took a room at that little hotel in Wilton Road where you knew he sometimes stayed. Then you sent him a telegram purporting to come from his friend Dupont, asking him to go to Webster's and meet him there. In response to this, poor Usborne went, but almost instantly on his arrival you paid your bill and left the hotel, taking your luggage to the cloak-room, across at Victoria. You then watched my friend out again and, reentering the hotel unseen, crept up to his room, the number of which you had already ascertained prior to leaving."

A sudden terror came into her eyes as she realized the intimateness of my knowledge. I went on relentlessly: "You concealed yourself until just before six. When he returned you emerged, and on pretense that you were ready to dispose of these selfsame papers, you induced him to sit down and examine them, just as I have done. Suddenly you placed your arm about his neck, while with your right hand you stuck the needle of the little hypodermic syringe—the one you now hold in your hand there—into the nape of his neck where you knew that the puncture would be concealed by the hair. It contained a deadly vegetable poison—as it does now!"

"It's a lie!" she cried. "You can't prove it!"

"I can, for as you held him you pressed his left cheek against the breast of your blouse, against that little circular brooch you are now wearing—the ring with four diamonds set at equal distances around it. The mark was left there—upon his face!"

She stood staring at me, unable to utter a word.

"After you had emptied that syringe you held him until he lay dead. Then you removed all traces of your presence and, stealing from the room, turned the key from the outside by means of that tiny hand vise which I notice lies in the small bowl upon the mantelshelf yonder. Afterward you crept downstairs and sent me a telegram, as though from the man who had already died by your hand. And, mademoiselle," I added severely, "I, too, should have shared the same fate, had I not recollected the smell of the Roumanian perfume and seen upon your blouse the round brooch which produced the red ring upon my friend's countenance!"

Then, without further word, I crossed to the telephone and, taking up the receiver, called the police.

The woman, suddenly aroused by my action, dashed toward me frantically to stay my hand, but she was too late. I had given warning.

She turned to the door, but I barred her passage.

For a moment she looked around in wild despair, then ere I could realize her intention or prevent her, she stuck the point of the deadly needle—the needle she intended to use upon me because I had assisted in clearing out those spies from Suffolk—deeply into her white, well-molded arm.

Five minutes later, when two policemen came up the stairs to arrest her, they found her lying lifeless.

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CARMELITA SOFIA McCANN
A SOLDIER OF FORTUNE IN PETTICOATS

By

CLARICE VALLETTE McCAULEY

CARMELITA SOFIA McCANN sat on the stringpiece of the dock and twiddled her thumbs. There wasn't much else for her to do. She was wofully out of pocket-money, and all of Carmelita's preconceived ideas of diversion required the cooperation of a bank-account in at least four figures. Besides, Carmelita had been sick—a rare and most depressing experience for her. Even now, in an absent-minded way, she pinched the perfect oval of her cheek between gently persuasive thumb and finger in an unconscious effort to revive some of the gorgeous Gaelic-Spanish coloring that was her birthright, meanwhile inwardly reviling the pugnacious little doctor who had ordered her off to Catalina's sea-kissed shores in the dull season.

"Git out of it! Git out of this whirrlpool!" he had said, with the privileged frankness of the physician who, having ushered his patient into the world and officiated at every bedside ceremony since, is not to be hoodwinked after twenty-three years of service by a sparkling eye or a roguish tongue. "Git out of it, or I'll no longer be r'spons'ble for y'r liver, y'r complexion 'r y'r sanity! Sure it'll be th' booby-hatch for yours, Carmeeleeta, me gurl—if you don't let th' stock markit alone; an' it's meself—that was y'r daddy's best friend—that's tellin' ye!"

"But, Doctor dear, Amalgamated Copper——"

"Has already cost ye more'n two thousand dollars, by y'r own showin'."

"But next week it's going down—down—down!"

"'Where th' Wurtzburrgur flows'—maybe! But you'll not be here to see it!"

"Oh, Doctor! Not just one more little twist in its tail?" wheedled Carmelita.

"With what—f'r th' love of heaven? From your own story y'are dead broke this minit'!"

"There's the little bungalow at Avalon, and the store——"

"You'd never be sellin' them?"

"They're not rented, so—why not? Oh—all right! Don't explode, Doctor! I'm too weak to pick up the pieces. I could mortgage——"

"You'll do nothin' of the kind!" growled the Doctor wrathfully.

"I'm of age!"

"A fool woman's never of age! I promised Terry to look after you, so ye'll pack up

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y'r duds and be off on th' first boat to Avalon. That's th' place that'll do th' trick—my lady!"

"*Dios mio!*" wailed Carmelita; "and what'll I be doing there at this time of the year?"

"Restin' an' thinkin' of y'r sins—an' goin' to bed with th' chickens."

"The sea-gulls, you mean."

"Eat three square meals a day, an' cook them y'self; an' do enough housework to keep from gettin' fat," concluded the doctor implacably.

Carmelita groaned—but she went; for she knew as well as did her adviser that, having dropped six months' income in a week, it behooved her to go into temporary retirement, as much for her health's sake as her reputation for paying her bills. However, she did not open the bungalow as the doctor had ordered. Carmelita's tastes were not domestic. Instead, she borrowed two hundred dollars and engaged a room at the best hotel, where she could see—and be seen.

Which explains how it came about that on a certain clear sunny day in the month of May she sat on the afore-mentioned string-piece of the dock—having nothing else to do—and watched the private yacht *Penguin* nosing its way across the sparkling crescent-shaped bay of Avalon.

Carmelita Sofia McCann was a child of chance and a product of the incongruous. Her father, Terence McCann—familiarly known as "Terry"—had been everything from a 49'r prospecting for gold in the mountains of Nevada County to a promoter with a doubtful reputation and the owner of a dozen bucket-shops scattered along the Pacific coast, all of them tributary to the so-called "Stock Broker's" office where he was usually to be found and at the back of which Carmelita had only narrowly escaped being born, the occasion—a jollification after a phenomenal clean-up by the spasmodically lucky Terry—having proven almost too great a shock to the lovely and excitable Mrs. McCann.

From this mother, boasting only the purest Andalusian blood, Carmelita had inherited her gorgeous *tout ensemble*, minus a pair of impudent gray eyes as Irish as her daddy's own. Perversely her temperament was her father's, while here the notable exception was a feline love of soft, warm, sensuous things, a certain haughty, indolent insouciance, oddly at variance with her quick wit and Hibernian audacity. Living the first twenty years of her life under the proud and indulgent tutelage of the not overly fastidious Terry, she had, at his untimely demise, graduated as a Soldier of Fortune in petticoats and, to the horror and dismay of Terry's friend and executor, Doctor Michael Philbrick, proceeded at once to take the most daring liberties with the modest little competence left by her father who, like most of his ilk, had made many fortunes—and lost them.

All of which, though parenthetical, is necessary to a correct interpretation of the state of mind of Carmelita Sofia McCann as she dangled her mutinous little feet perilously near the lapping waters and watched the sheen on a pair of well-rounded, silk-clad ankles that were luxuriating in a sun bath. To be marooned, even in Paradise, was distinctly undesirable, and Carmelita was bored. Not that she was oblivious to the beauties of the scenery. On the contrary, she was exquisitely appreciative of the merits of scenery—as a background; and she had a nice discrimination in the selection of a fitting set for a rendezvous, quarrel, reconciliation or engagement. But since the beautiful Catalina Island had been the *mise-en-scene* for all of Carmelita's Summer escapades, she estimated its charms in a purely commercial way, and was dismissing them as unnegotiable assets when she became telepathically aware that she was under scrutiny, and sweeping the craft in sight for confirmation, found it in the telltale points of light against a darkly outlined figure on board the *Penguin*, evidence that argued binoculars in unscrupulous hands.

Carmelita smiled mysteriously. In spite of the apparent impossibility of the performance, she rose leisurely and gracefully to her feet and stood for fully five minutes with wind-blown skirts and sun-kissed hair—a vivid, impressionistic figure outlined against the blue of the bay and sky.

Then, with her best Dianesque gait, she went back to the Metropole to dress for dinner.

II

F BABBINGTON CARTARET had, in his forty-odd years, been in many climes and done many things. Likewise he had been known by many names and had

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boasted several nationalities. He was rather partial to his present rôle, that of a nomadic Englishman of moderate means and sportsmanlike tastes. It was a part, histrionically speaking, well within his limitations, and one for which nature, in the matter of features and coloring, and circumstances—in the guise of a sojourn in England sufficiently long to permit his acquiring the proper raiment and accent—had generously adapted him.

O. Howell Bubbidge, a rougher and less subtle type of the *chevalier d'industrie*, was the owner of the private yacht *Penguin*, a handy little craft with a very checkered career. Rumor said that she had been used to entertain Royalty, also to smuggle Chinamen in from Lower California, and rumor was as likely to be right in one instance as the other. In any event, O. Howell Bubbidge, through financial vicissitudes innumerable, had stuck to his possession of the *Penguin* with all the desperate loyalty of a woman for her engagement solitaire. She was a convenient thing to own, inasmuch as she was always ready to move on a moment's notice—not an altogether undesirable quality in anything belonging to a gentleman of O. Howell's roving, versatile and, let us say, adventurous disposition.

Having registered at the Metropole, these two worthies were standing at the office desk earnestly engaged in a confidential chat with the clerk, when Carmelita Sofia, gorgeously gowned (one never thought of Carmelita as merely *dressed*), stepped out of the elevator and trailed her way gracefully across the lobby, bound, ostensibly, for a glimpse of the sunset and sea before entering the dining-room.

"Oh, I say, you know, there she is! By Jove, Bub! she's a stunner! What's her name, old man?"

The clerk addressed looked slightly bored. Carmelita had been one of the Summer show sights of the island since her fifteenth year, hence his lack of enthusiasm.

"That," he said, gravely, "is Señorita Carmelita Sofia McCann," lingering a bit humorously on the last syllable.

"McCann? Fawncy that! Mc ann! Rummy name for a Spanish girl; she *is* Spanish, eh, what?" queried Cartaret excitedly.

The clerk was about to enlighten him when Bubbidge, who was fat, bald and fifty, purpling with excitement up beyond where the roots of his hair should have been, interrupted:

"McCann? Surely not 'Terry' McCann's girl! She is? Well, well, well! I knew her father in Los Angeles twenty years ago." Then, drawing his companion aside, he continued: "Say! You *are* in luck, my boy. Just you go and smoke a while; calm your agitated nerves—and let your Uncle Howell follow up this little matter for you."

A few moments later Carmelita's sentimental reverie was interrupted by the clerk, who bore O. Howell's card on a silver tray.

"A gentleman who says he knew your father back in '87 in Los Angeles, Miss McCann, would greatly appreciate the honor of meeting you."

Carmelita read the name indifferently, then fixed the inoffensive clerk with her wide gray eyes.

"Tell me—I really want to know," she drawled sweetly; "do you make it up for them, George?"

"'Pon my honor, Miss McCann——"

"It doesn't seem possible," interrupted Carmelita sadly, "that such a dearth of imagination could exist. Pardon the unworthy suspicion, George; I really think if they left it to you, you could vary the monotony of the formula somewhat. However, you may tell the gentleman—Mr. Bubbidge, is it?—that 'any friend of my father's'—you know the rest."

The clerk went away chuckling, and Carmelita, after readjusting the golden scarf that hung about her shoulders, took her prettiest pose in anticipation of the coming of the two men, of whose presence and agitation she had not been unaware.

Naturally she dined that evening as the guest of the pompous and flustered Bubbidge and the imperturbable Cartaret, and before she went to bed that night she felt, somehow, moved to pen the following indignant protest to Doctor Philbrick:

It's all very well to prate of my health. I never felt better—or had less—in my life, and I warn you that Satan will yet find some perfectly splendid deviltry for my idle hands to do if I don't get away from this place. Meanwhile, that miserable store is not yet rented for the Summer. Perhaps I shall open it myself. The people are tired of ice-cream parlors and postcard shops. What would *you* suggest: Hair-dresser, Palmist or Fancy Laundress? I rather favor a Stock Broker's office—myself. *Sabe?*

Yours
CARMELITA SOFIA MCCANN.

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Carmelita enjoyed baiting the doctor; it was always so easy to get the irascible little old man enraged. She thought of her letter complacently; moreover, the idea born wholly of a mischievous impulse was dandled about tentatively before she fell asleep. It needed but a very little fostering to thrive, and that fell to the lot of F. Babbington Cartaret, who suggested, next morning, that they see the island, with Miss McCann as cicerone.

Now, it wasn't exactly Cartaret's conception of his rôle to appear acquainted with the various polite methods of acquiring the public's surplus coin. That O. Howell Bubbidge persisted in dragging them into the conversation whenever opportunity permitted amazed him no less than did the extent of Carmelita's knowledge of dubious finance. Before the morning was well advanced she and Bubbidge were exchanging reminiscences and experiences with a freedom that struck the pseudo-Britisher (who had never met a woman like her) as reckless and terrifying. In a burst of most unfeminine amusement at her own gullibility, Carmelita confessed to her unfortunate investment in Amalgamated Copper.

"Nervousness, pure nervousness, you know, Mr. Bubbidge. I went long of the market too soon: the slump came, and——" she paused.

"They wiped you off the earth, eh?" laughed Bubbidge.

He looked at the young woman curiously. She met the scrutiny with level, challenging gaze. There was appraisement in both their eyes: just so might one high-class pirate recognize another. Then—Cartaret could scarcely believe it—Carmelita winked; deliberately, meaningly winked, as she relapsed into the rich brogue with which she loved to startle the uninitiated.

"G'wan! Out wid it! Sure you'll choke if you don't. You're wonderin' what th' divil a McCann was doin' *on th' outside* of th' game, eh? Am I right?"

"Right you are!" replied Bubbidge admiringly. "The fact is, Miss McCann, I was wondering how a lady with your unprecedented opportunities for learning the business—and your inheritance—could be so foolhardy as to take 'the short end' of it."

"Meaning—just what?" asked Carmelita.

"Why—whatever became of your Dad's bucket—er, his brokerage offices?"

Carmelita's twinkling eyes acknowledged Bubbidge's embarrassed correction.

"You may well ask that, Mr. Bubbidge. Dad's affairs were in a fine pickle when he died; he'd nothing much to leave behind but his reputation, and you can imagine what his creditors did to that."

"Too bad! Too bad!" said Bubbidge, with a sigh. "But of course *you* know there's nothing to be made playing the market on the outside, Miss McCann; it's win to-day and lose to-morrow. It's the fellows that furnish amusement, excitement and—sport! for the dear public that get all the profit, in the end."

In their stroll they had reached the Aquarium, their sight-seeing being accomplished with the indifference of people whose conversation is more important. It was then that F. Babbington Cartaret, who had been listening intently, delivered himself of the momentous conviction that he believed in keeping with the character he had asssumed.

"Sport? Why, I say, old chap, playing the stock market isn't sport; not the way we Englishmen understand sport."

"It's a gamble, isn't it?" replied Bubbidge.

"Pshaw! My dear fellow, a gamble controlled by cliques, instead of by the fixed rules of a perfectly impartial game, isn't sport. Of course, the participant takes a chance——"

"You'd have said so if you could have seen me buy a thousand 'Copper' on a two-point margin," interrupted Carmelita laughingly.

"Foolish girl!" commented Bubbidge.

"Now to make the game perfectly fair," continued Cartaret, blandly oblivious to interruption, "it should be controlled by some purely automatic means——"

"Such as?" queried Carmelita, a note of awakening interest in her voice.

"A force which eventually expends itself; for instance, a roulette wheel, which——"

"Cartaret, you're crazy!" interrupted Bubbidge.

"Not at all, not at all, dear boy—I assure you. My word! What have we here? Rummy looking object, that. What is it; a sea snake?"

Carmelita, who who knew the contents of the Aquarium as a child does its first picture-

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book, cast an absent-minded glance at the tank indicated.

"No," she said, "an electric eel."

"Really? Electric, eh? Indigenous to these waters?"

The girl turned on him a glance that was amused, indulgent; there was a certain saucy patronage in her inscrutable eyes.

"You'd say so if you went in swimming here and got up against one. 'Avoid the eels or you'll be shocked!'" she said merrily. "What is it, Captain, that they claim for these eels?"

The custodian of the Aquarium, a rugged old sea-dog, took in Cartaret's plight at a glance. His experience with the girl had been a broad and varied one, and receiving her challenging look without flinching, he played delightedly into her hand.

"They says, mum," he replied with perfect gravity, "that every one of 'em has enough energy stored in its slimy carcass t' keep a one-candle-power 'lectric lamp a'goin' stiddy."

"Just fawncy!" exclaimed Cartaret. "Such tremendous natural power going to waste! Too bad they cawn't find some means of utilizing it; eh, what?"

Carmelita caught his arm dramatically.

"Hush! Don't speak," she whispered. "Though naturally a sociable creature, if you value my friendship—not a word for five minutes!"

"I say, what's up?" gasped Cartaret.

"An idea! A regular bucking bronco of an idea! and it may take that long to corral it. Mr. Bubbidge, please don't let me stay in a trance more than five minutes."

The gallant but mystified Bubbidge was going through the formality of timing her, when the girl turned toward him gleefully.

"I' ve got it!" she cried. "Oh, do let's go where we can talk with some degree of comfort."

"That suggests a table between us with some tall glasses on it," said Bubbidge. "How'd the Casino do?"

There was an air of subdued eagerness about the trio, and the waiter had no sooner been dismissed than both men looked expectantly at Carmelita.

"What's up?"

"It's the blood of the McCanns that's up!" said Carmelita firmly. "You'll please be good enough to forget that Andalusian dynasty of which my mirror is constantly reminding me and remember that it's Terry McCann's daughter that's talking. First, tell me, Mr. Bubbidge, is our friend here as green as he looks?"

Cartaret drew himself up with well-simulated confusion; Bubbidge, kicking him on the shin, answered promptly:

"Oh, he knows enough to pound sand into a rat-hole all right, Miss McCann; and, as you can see, his chief recommendation for any purpose is his discretion. Yes?"

"Oh! Invaluable!" said Carmelita, giggling. "I can already see him doing the honors on the floor in the customers' room. He might even be safely permitted to consort with country bankers, corporation lawyers—and clergymen who wanted to take a flyer, and——"

"What are you driving at?"

"Patience! I shall a scheme unfold! But first: Are either of you scientists? No? Practical mechanics? Electricians? No? Just financiers out of a job—eh? Oh, well, perhaps it's better so. You may not know that I have a riotous imagination, gentlemen; I do not care to hamper it with too many stern facts. *We* are going to provide for the Summer population of Avalon a brand new sensation! Do you follow me?"

"Perfectly—so far. What's next?" said Bubbidge.

Carmelita studied her fellow conspirators longingly.

"I wish—I knew——"

"*What!*"

To their surprise an ingenuous blush swept over the olive tint of Carmelita's delicately oval face; her heavily fringed eyes closed for a second, and when they opened again they were misty, wistful; her brow puckered like a worried child's; the carmine lips pursed themselves into a mutinous rose-bud; her hands clasped and unclasped nervously. Both men, mystified by her by-play, bent solicitously toward her.

"Miss Carmelita! What is it? What's the matter?"

"Oh, h-e-l-l!" drawled Carmelita softly.

The effect was electrical. Bubbidge threw back his head and laughed till the tears ran down his cheeks; Cartaret choked, sputtered and gasped like a half-drowned puppy.

"Feeling better?" he asked finally.

"Sure!" said Carmelita with cheerful matter-of-factness. "The truth is, I'm broke—*dead* broke! Just when, as Dad used to say, I see a chance to clean up a fortune! Now, I take it, you gentlemen

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might not be averse to an investment, a very moderate one, if you could more than quadruple your principal in a month. Eh?"

Cartaret and Bubbidge exchanged glances; the latter spoke with some confusion.

"It would have to be a *very* moderate one, indeed, for we're pretty near 'all in.' This is our final splurge, and we've either got to round up an easy one and take his coin away quick, or go in hock ourselves."

"Mercy!" cried Carmelita in mock horror; "how scandalously you talk. Well, then, listen. I have a little store on Surf Avenue; it's empty. Why not open a 'Stock Broker's office'?" She paused for effect.

"Here? Nonsense! How'll you get your quotations?"

"Oh, that's easy; we'll *make* them. We only need trade in three or four stocks—'phony's,' with fancy names—admittedly fictitious, you know; and the power that operates the ticker—and here we can afford to be candid with our public—will be unbiased, as well as incapable of partiality or bribery," said Carmelita, with all the glibness of speech of a "Class A" con-artist.

Bubbidge's eyes glowed with interest; he was beginning to sense the trend of her idea. Cartaret's face wore a puzzled look,

"In other words," continued Carmelita, weighing her words deliberately, "we'll use a tank full of—*electric eels!* Oh, don't shake your head; they'll stand for it, tank, eels—and all, if you make it strong enough."

"But how——"

"Imagine," continued Carmelita, her eyes narrowing clairvoyantly at space, "a handsome plate-glass aquarium in the middle of the room; it is connected with wires that run to the tickers; the wires—two of them for each stock quoted—are finished off with polished copper balls that protrude into the water of the tank. We tell the curious and greedy investors that as the eels swim about, they must, of necessity, touch these balls, and that when they do so *the circuit is completed*, and that according to which ball they touch, the 'A' or 'B' of any set, the ticker moves backward or forward and the price goes up or down. Don't laugh; just wait! they'll swallow it as a fish does a worm. Leave it to me!"

"That's all right, so far as amusing the public is concerned," objected Cartaret, "but just where do *we* come in?"

Carmelita's amazed stare resolved itself into a wink at Bubbidge.

"Is it possible that this great baby that you are chaperoning never saw an old fashioned 'clock'—a 'tape-game'? Stupid!"

Cartaret started nervously.

"But, I say, Miss McCann, that's illegal!"

"Oh, don't be a coward! If you can furnish these people with 'amusement and diversion,' no matter how expensive it is—to them, I don't believe any one will trouble you. Of course, though, you mustn't overdo it."

Bubbidge chuckled. "You're a wonder, Miss McCann! I'm beginning to see this thing."

"Beginning to? I *can* see it! Look here! I've got it all mapped out." As she spoke she marshalled knives, forks, salt- and pepper-shakers before her into the semblance of a plan. "Here is the entrance, which we will make as gorgeous and impressive as our cash will permit. Here, on this side, will be the 'quotation' board; at this end a ticker; in the middle of the room—the tank; and, running up to the ceiling—from the tank, in full view of every one, the wires that connect it with the tickers. Do I make it clear? Yes? Thanks!

"Of course, some one will be needed on the floor. The tabasco, please. This, my dear Mr. Cartaret, is where *your* ingenuousness will be invaluable. Here," she took possession of a menu card, "is where the cashier's cage will be (I will be the cashier); there will be a ticker at my right hand. My part is to smile encouragingly and make the plunger who has intended to trade in a paltry fifty shares feel himself a piker if he doesn't take on at least a hundred. I'll take his margins, write his receipt, file his order and—drop the duplicate into a box behind me, where it will be immediately within the reach of our friend, Mr. Bubbidge. I suppose that we can look to you for your part of the combination, eh?"

"Of course that depends——" began Bubbidge.

Carmelita dimpled appreciatively.

"Oh, as for that," she broke in knowingly, "it couldn't be better if built to order. Back of the cashier's office," she indicated with a spoon, "is this little store-room; there is no entrance from it to the main office—it opens into a side alley. The duplicate slips will drop through a hole in the

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partition right on to your desk every time a trade is made! Surely you can figure out what the next market is *going to be* from the sheets before you. Yes? I thought so. Then you press this little button; it connects with a buzzer under my desk; I move a lever (gallery play to impress the audience) and—behold! the magnets in the tickers work and new prices are made for the stocks. Don't look so innocent, Mr. Cartaret. You've never heard of a duplicate set of wires *run under the floor* and connected with a set of telegraph keys in a desk drawer, have you? Oh, no, not you! I happen to be pretty certain that our friend Bubbidge has seen quotations made that way, even if he hasn't actually made them."

"Say, now, damme, but that's clever!" said Cartaret, moved for once out of his assumption of denseness. "Beats me how you could ever think of such a thing."

Carmelita bowed mockingly. "Mr. Bubbidge can tell you that they taught these things in the kindergarten I attended."

"I'm sure it's awfully flattering of you to trust us," murmured Cartaret.

"Trust you? My dear Cartaret, get that idea right out of your head. I *need* you, and I take it you need me. As for Mr. Bubbidge—own up now, I couldn't lose *you* if I tried!"

"Not me!" laughed Bubbidge good-naturedly. "Say, if you two have finished playing with those peppermint leaves, and don't want another, let's go look at that store."

III

TO THOSE who have grasped the essential point possessed in common by the trio it goes without saying that "The Cartaret Brokerage Company" was already *un fait accompli;* for those less sophisticated it may perhaps be necessary to bridge the literary hiatus by the statement that after several very busy weeks for all parties concerned the opening of the season saw the conspirators ready to provide the earliest comers with the amusement sensation of their lives. The skeptics in vain decried the manifest absurdity of the idea; it was presented with such a semblance of reality that those not actually taken in by its pseudo-scientific plausibility succumbed eagerly to the exquisite buffoonery that could so pander to a jaded taste. Even those who in the conventional atmosphere of their city homes would have scorned gambling in any guise were drawn by curiosity—or something else—to patronize the "Automatic Stock Exchange," as it was called.

Besides, if every other lure failed, there was always Carmelita, whose olive-tinted face, crowned with its regal braids, framed in the little gilt window, was a sight that no transient visitor, however cautious in the matter of investments, would have thought of missing.

So that, at the daily sessions of the "Automat," brief as they were, being restricted to two hours each, money poured into the cash-box so lavishly that Carmelita was obliged to urge temperance and generosity; for the astute daughter of Terry McCann, with the training born of long experience in meeting and entertaining a variety of gentleman whose specialty was sharp practise, had an unerring eye, and could distinguish the born gambler who took his gains nonchalantly and his losses gamely, from pikers, newspaper men and others whose efforts lay in the direction that might lead to undesirable publicity, and had on several occasions turned the tide in their favor most neatly by forcing the firm to stomach considerable losses, which she did by means of a private mark on the duplicate slip passed to Bubbidge, a mark he had pledged himself to respect without question. So, for example, Billy Betts, of the Los Angeles *Daily Wave*, seriously tempted to ferret out what might have been a good story, had thrown up both hands when Saturday night's session left him most unexpectedly a handsome winner.

And then that *Boy* had to make mischief.

With one of those rare moods that set her star-gazing and roused in her all the warm, languorous, pulsating loveliness of a southern-born child set down suddenly among aliens, Carmelita had softened to Harrold Bennett at the very moment of his introduction. Several times Sunday she crossed his path, lingering half wistfully in the crossing, but though he bowed with obvious admiration, he made no attempt to join her. Whereupon, Carmelita, with the willful coquetry of her Andalusian mother, was both flattered and piqued, and sought him out in his dark corner of the piazza.

"You're not especially attached to this end of the porch, are you, Mr. Bennett?" she asked. "Because, I thought you might

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like to know you're missing a moon-rise on the bay."

"I was just wishing——"

"I'm going down to enjoy it," continued Carmelita. "If you think——"

"Oh, may I?" The boy's pleasure was exquisite flattery.

"Of course! Where is the end of that scarf?"

"If you'll allow me," said Bennett hastily.

Carmelita smiled at the eager clumsiness with which he sought and disentangled the end of the rosy cloud and helped wind it more securely about her head and shoulders.

Once down on the hard white sands of the beach, conversation seemed superfluous, and the woman who could trail across a crowded ball-room with a sinuous grace that drew all eyes toward her, found secret joy as she swung out suddenly shoulder to shoulder with her companion, in an athletic, boyish stride. Finally, venturing a glance at the smiling face so little above her own, she asked abruptly:

"What are you thinking of?"

"Of my sweetheart!" said Bennett innocently.

"Oh!" cried Carmelita, startled almost into self-betrayal.

"You see," said the boy, failing to note her sudden exclamation, "I was wishing the girl I'm engaged to back home knew you."

"Dear me, just fawncy that!" said Carmelita, in her confusion borrowing one of Cartaret's pet phrases.

"She needs some one like you," the boy blundered on; "she's just a little girl, you know, who's been sheltered all her life. Last year her father died, and she's gone into a business house till I can earn enough to take care of her; and—I'm afraid—she isn't cut out for a business woman."

"What makes you think she would like me?" pouted Carmelita.

"Oh, she'd be sure to admire you so much, Miss McCann; every one does."

Carmelita's voice grew suddenly vindictive.

"Do you think she'd like the business I'm in?"

The boy fidgeted uncomfortably.

"Well, no, Miss Carmelita, I don't," he admitted. "Of course, though, it's not gambling, exactly, but——"

"You bet it is! for the trader——"

"And for you, too!" interrupted Bennett. "That's what makes it seem fair to me. It's just a question of luck."

"Oh, yes, of course." Carmelita bit her lip. The knowledge of how nearly she had given the truth to this bright-faced youth before her made her usually huskily-sweet Irish contralto sound rough and unsympathetic, as she said:

"I notice *you* didn't experiment any." Then, as if an afterthought: "Well, good principles are sometimes the part of wisdom."

"Oh, come now, Miss McCann, you mustn't think I'm a prig," the boy hastened to reassure her, flushing with sudden heat at the thought. "The fact is, I haven't much to lose; but then, on the other hand, if I had the sort of luck Betts had, I might pull out enough to send for my little girl right away, mightn't I?"

"I wouldn't tempt Fate, if I were you," said Carmelita nonchalantly; "the slimy things are that contrary! Why, the other night 'El Doro' started to go up and it went the one way all evening, right up to the close. When we looked into the tank, what do you think we found? There was an eel fast asleep on the El Doro 'A' wire! What *are* you laughing at? Don't you suppose that eels ever sleep? Well, then, it must have been sick, for it never moved till I gave it a push with a lead-pencil," lied Carmelita smoothly. "Now, suppose you had been on the 'short' side of El Doro, where would you be?"

"Nursing a bad headache about this time," said Bennett laughing. "Just the same, Miss McCann, I've half a notion to stay over next week and have a try at my luck."

Carmelita's eyes rested for a moment on his; then they swept slowly, appreciatively around the beautiful curve of the crescent-shaped bay out to where the moonlight trailed a silvery path across the sea.

"Go slow, then," she said resignedly, and borrowing from the memories of the dead an expression her father had often used, she added: "and may the Saints go wid you!"

IV

CARMELITA sat on the stringpiece of the dock and twiddled her thumbs; but this time she was not alone, and the shapely silk-clad extremities that terminated so

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neatly in a pair of bathing sandals indicated that an occupation awaited her pleasure. Moreover, her companion. F. Babbington Cartaret, showing his well-knit and athletic figure to striking advantage in his bathing suit, was evidently giving the fair Carmelita food for thought, if one might judge by the impatient foot-slaps she gave the water.

"Do you know, Babby dear," she said, "you are growing positively unpleasant?"

"Unrequited love," said Cartaret shortly. Then blinking away a drop of water that had splashed squarely into his eye, he added crossly: "I wish you'd sit still; you'll fall off there, first thing you know."

"What's the odds?" murmured Carmelita sweetly. "I'd only get wet—and that's what I'm dressed for."

"You might find *falling* into the water a different proposition from *diving* in," returned Cartaret with some asperity.

"Just fawncy!" mocked Carmelita. "I wonder if he means anything? By the way, Babby *dear*, what has become of that wonderful accent of yours?"

"Oh, what's the use?" demanded Cartaret. "You guyed me till I dropped it, and when I did—you guyed some more. I thought at first you were a good fellow, Carmelita, but I declare you seem to have had it in for me from the start."

"Do you know why?" Carmelita's eyes narrowed threateningly. "You looked so plagued well satisfied with yourself and your powers, and—I hate a man that plays a part, anyhow! Do you *really* think you are fascinating, Mr. Cartaret?"

"Of course not!"

"Well, I misjudged you, then," said Carmelita, mildly apologetic. "I'm so sorry; but do you know, Babby dear, you gave me the impression—you were such a duffer about it too!—that you thought I was yours for the asking. I may be wrong," her voice hardened perceptibly, "but you still appear to think so, in spite of all my efforts, else why have you been boring me with all this green-eyed monster play? For, to use your own words, it *is* a beastly bore!"

Cartaret cleared his throat and mentally reached after his elusive dignity, which, in Carmelita's presence, was perpetually escaping him.

"Oh, very well, then; we'll discuss the subject from a business point of view. We'll forego the fact that this Kid has been here several weeks, and that he hangs about you whenever he gets a chance," he sneered.

"I wish you'd give him more opportunity," retorted Carmelita.

"But you can't shut my eyes to the fact," continued Cartaret, without appearing to notice the interruption, "that his infernal bets are always on the wrong side of the sheet for us! Oh, don't pretend that you don't follow me; Bubbidge didn't *say* much about it, but I could see he thought it damned queer that three times last evening Bennett's play was the only one on the winning side. He won two-hundred and fifty on 'Plano'——"

"What of it?" broke in Carmelita; "four others lost two hundred on that same turn. We've got to let *somebody* win!"

"Yes, but how does *he* know——"

"Goodness! how can I tell?" replied Carmelita. "Now, see here, Mr. Cartaret! You weary me; you can't expect to take everybody's money and never give *any* of it back."

"I don't mind telling you," said Cartaret, looking straight into his companion's face with a meaning that was unmistakable, "that it looks to me as if he'd been tipped!"

"Yes?" Carmelita rose leisurely to her feet. "You are trying to say, I presume, that I'm in cahoots with that boy? You've a sweet mind, good sir! You'd even corrupt the eels! Stay right where you are—you make such a lovely picture, and—I prefer my own company to yours, anyhow."

Carmelita's rounded arms performed certain little evolutions beloved of swimmers, and in a few moments she was making her way to a blonde and upturned face bobbing about on the waters. Its owner splashed over as she joined him and swam alongside side of her.

"Well?" she said, smiling into his happy face.

"Well, I sent the little girl a bunch of coin this morning, told her to get some duds and hold herself ready for my telegram. Gee, but I'm happy!"

"You look it," sighed Carmelita half enviously.

"And I owe it to you."

"Ssh! Don't say that; people would misunderstand. I haven't done anything."

"That's so!" admitted the boy, a puzzled look flitting over his face, "but I always

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feel as though something—was telling me —oh, I can't explain! Queer, isn't it?"

"Awfully so," said Carmelita.

V

WHAT the end of this story would have been if Betts had not arrived on the afternoon boat I am not prepared to say. Human nature is prone to greed, and Carmelita's cavalier disregard of the sulky Cartaret might well have precipitated an internal war and brought about a speedy dissolution of the Cartaret Brokerage Company. For Avalon was fast tiring of the eels; the novelty was wearing off; and while every born gambler, believer in oracles, soothsayers and the like, had "consulted" them as a matter of course, the wriggling denizens of the deep were rapidly being consigned to that limbo in which belong roulette-wheels, faro-banks, chuck-luck and other things impossible to beat. There was also developing a suspicion that here was no legitimate game of chance, but rather an invention of the devil, beside which the machinations of the late Mr. Soapy Smith, erstwhile of Alaska fame, would have seemed as fair and square as a Sunday-school grab-bag. There were even those who darkly hinted at a possible *modus operandi*, so that of late the fires under the *Penguin's* boilers were never permitted to get beyond a point where fifteen minutes wide-open draft would not develop a head of steam sufficient to show a clean pair of heels to anything in the waters round about Catalina.

"When the time comes, of course you'll slough with us?" Bubbidge had said at the first hint of discontent on the part of their patrons: but Carmelita shook her head slowly:

"Nothing doing in that line! You rented my store and engaged me (or rather Cartaret did) as cashier; that's *all* I know about the pair of you, my dear Mr. Bubbidge," she replied with elaborate dignity. "Sure, there'll need to be a blind, and I'm the one to stay here and play the innocent."

"Huh! You'd give the whole snap away!" growled Cartaret.

"Now that's really 'very nawsty' of you, Babby dear," retorted Carmelita. "Believe me, you underestimate my histrionic abilities. Also," she murmured under her breath, "you little suspect what a mind-reader I am."

It may have been due to this unsuspected ability that she instantly interpreted the reappearance of Betts on the scene as a danger-signal. This intuition—which she told herself was a "hunch" the minute she saw him—was strengthened when he greeted Bennett a few moments later with:

"Hello, boy; I hear you're winning coin in bunches."

Bennett laughed awkwardly. He took his good luck with a *gaucherie* that made Carmelita want to shake him, and acted more like a boy who half suspects that he's guilty of something underhand than a man who is beating a game. While to him there was nothing strange in Betts' salutation, to Carmelita there instantly flashed the thought: "Ah, ha! Betts has talked with no one—since his arrival—but the clerk; therefore, some one has considered it worth while to write him. That *does* settle it; they're getting next!"

As though he read what was going on in her mind, Betts moved over to where she stood at the end of the piazza nearest the bay—svelte, bizarre, alluring as an *Art Nouveau* Aphrodite.

"It's a double pleasure to meet you so soon again," he challenged.

"You are flattering. May I reciprocate?"

"If you only would."

Carmelita's raised eyebrows teased subtly, while her wide gray eyes searched, probed.

"But why *double?*" she asked at last.

"Because I am on the trail of a story——"

"Ah! Then it is to that we owe this unexpected pleasure——"

"—and I look confidently to you for help," concluded Betts blandly.

"How good of you to let me!" gushed Carmelita softly. "I shall feel that I am making history."

What Betts murmured *sotto voce* in reply was intended for Carmelita's ear alone; besides, it has nothing whatever to do with the story. Her low laughter blended as concordantly with the whispering night breeze and lapping waters, the stars and the distant music of a waltz, as though she had been written in the same key.

"Your flattery is very subtle, very intoxicating, on such a night as this," she drawled tantalizingly. "Would it ring as true by daylight? I wonder!"

"Try me and see."

"I will. Would to-morrow morning do for the story?"

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"To-night is better."

"But I'm due at the 'Automat'—horrid word!" she grimaced like a saucy child. "I've grown very tired of it. I wonder why?"

"It takes you from me."

"Oh, to be sure. I knew there must be some potent reason; the distaste came so suddenly. Good-night!"

"But I'm going there, too."

"Oh! I thought—perhaps—you would be busy with your story."

"I shall be."

"Wonderful men, these journalists!" she mocked. "Such powers of concentration, such——"

"Intuition!" said Betts calmly. "Are you going our way, Bennett?"

The boy joined them quickly, but not before Carmelita, under cover of his advance, had time to say: "Now, why *did* you do that?"

"I like the boy, besides—he's part of the story."

As they moved along down the starlit street, Betts turned to the lad playfully.

"Bennett, to just what do you attribute your marvelous luck?"

Carmelita held her breath, the boy's laugh was so ingenuous.

"To the light that lies in the Señorita's eyes," he answered gallantly.

"Shameless! I suspect you of hinting that she winks." And Betts, satisfied for the time, led the talk into safer channels.

VI

AFTER the third "market" of the evening session Carmelita, who had just paid Betts his winnings, was suddenly taken ill. So serious was her indisposition that she showed no signs of recovery until after several of the patrons, Bennett and Betts among them, had gone in search of medical restoratives and a physician. Then, interestingly pale and plaintively weak-voiced, she prevailed upon the bewildered Cartaret to close the Exchange for the evening. After that she had a heart-to-heart talk with her partners, in the private office. It was not long, but it served the purpose. On the way to the hotel Carmelita met Bennett returning with restoratives and guided him from the danger-zone; by the time Betts arrived with a doctor the place was dark. On the locked door a crudely printed sign announced that the Exchange would be open for business, as usual, next morning.

It was long after midnight when a blue-skirted girl wearing a gray sweater let herself cautiously into the Exchange. Feeling about carefully in the dark she made sure that certain incriminating evidences, in the shape of wires running from beneath the floors to the tickers, had been removed. Then she groped her way to the tank, where she hovered distastefully for a minute or two before emptying into it the contents of a small box that she had brought with her. She paid a stealthy visit to the stuffy little store-room, where, with no fear of detection, she flashed about her the rays from a small pocket torch and satisfied herself that the desk drawer was empty, the holes in the floor plugged up and smeared over with dust, and everything generally as it should be.

Closing and locking the street door behind her, Carmelita wheeled about to find a cigar blinking at her in the darkness. Instantly the little torch flashed in the smoker's face, and she gave a sigh of relief.

"Oh, it's you?"

"Yes; I thought I'd wait around and see you safe back to the hotel."

"Very kind of you, Mr. Betts, I'm——"

"That is, if you're quite through."

"Oh, I'm quite through, thank you."

The silence was unbroken for several minutes. The cigar glowed unremittingly; Carmelita's stride suggested complete recovery. Suddenly:

"I'd forgotten to feed the eels, and couldn't sleep for thinking of the hungry things. They're an awful nuisance."

"Awful!" agreed Betts.

"They're only fed at night; if you stuff them in the daytime they get sluggish and it interferes with the flow of animal magnetism," continued Carmelita smoothly.

"I see," said Betts politely. "What do you feed them?"

"Porterhouse—chopped fine," answered Carmelita demurely.

Betts chuckled. "Miss McCann, if I had your imagination I'd never do another day's work as long as I lived!"

"On the contrary," replied Carmelita reproachfully, "if you had my imagination you'd be busy working out of scrapes it got you into."

"If," said Betts irrelevantly, "instead of

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turning you over to the proper authorities, I let you get back into the hotel the way you came out——"

"Did you see me?" giggled Carmelita.

"I certainly did!" said Betts with chill severity. "Will you give me the story?"

Carmelita smiled evasively. "Yes, as soon as it's finished," she agreed. "Never skip the end of a good story, Mr. Betts."

The following morning on the stroke of ten Carmelita left the cashier's cage and strode solemnly to the side of the tank, which, contrary to custom, was covered with purple bunting. Her appearance was the signal for quite a stir among those already in the room, one of those inexplicable inspirations having drawn a larger crowd than usual. Several voices were raised in inquiry, solicitous or chaffing, for her health, but she hushed them with a gesture.

"I'm sorry to have to tell you," she said quietly, her eyes seeking Betts by the door, "that a most untoward accident will compel us to keep the Exchange closed for several days at least."

"What's the matter? Cartaret skipped with the dough?" queried a voice from behind her.

Carmelita turned slightly and eyed the speaker reproachfully. "As you are probably aware," she continued, "I was suddenly taken ill last evening. At that time the current was turned on in the eel-tank, and during the excitement no one thought to turn it off."

"Good Lord! she's electrocuted 'Exhibit A'," groaned Betts softly.

"As a result the eels were subjected to the necessity of furnishing electric energy continuously throughout the night," said Carmelita. "When Mr. Cartaret came here early this morning they were all—dead!" She lifted the corner of the bunting gingerly and the crowd pressed forward, laughing, incredulous. "They will of course be replaced, though it may take some time; but just as soon as Mr. Cartaret, who is now scouring the coast on Mr. Bubbidge's yacht with the best fisherman he could employ——"

"Name, please?" interrupted a member of the Tuna Club.

"—can secure the requisite number of electric eels, business on the Exchange will be resumed," concluded Carmelita.

"Not with *my* money!" shouted a big, fat man.

"Are you quite sure you didn't overfeed them, Miss McCann?" said Betts, at which the dignity of the entire company was hopelessly shattered.

After dinner that day Betts lounged in a steamer-chair, waiting for Carmelita to appear. While he waited, he dozed. George the clerk, wandering that way for a breath of air, found him nodding grouchily over a magazine, and vouchsafed the information, unasked, that two of his friends had departed.

"Which ones?" asked Betts.

"Well, Bennett's gone to Denver to meet his girl, and Miss McCann went to town to see her doctor. She said she might be back, but it isn't likely—not while 'Amalgamated Copper' keeps going up."

"What a damned chump I am!" was Betts' only comment.

A few weeks later Betts received by mail from New York a bulky manuscript; with it came the following letter:

FRIEND BETTS:

To the King of Good Fellows, Greeting!

Dad taught me never to welch on a gambling debt. I promised you a story, and I won't renege; here it is! Publish it in part—or not at all, as you choose; but—for heaven's sake! make me out attractive. I may want to appear in public again, and so much depends on a début.

Yours—in fact or fiction—

CARMELITA SOFIA MCCANN.

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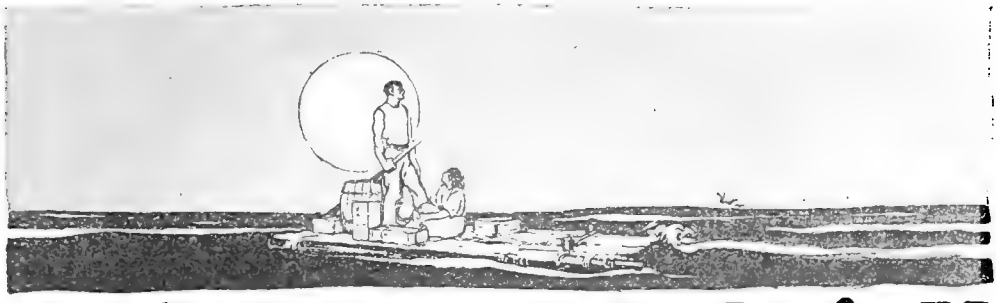

MAN FRIDAY

by Owen Oliver

MARIAN BAYLIS woke from her beauty-sleep to find a wild-eyed steward shaking her by the shoulder. The ship was on a rock, he said.

He banged at the door five minutes later and told her to hurry. He did not wait for an answer, and there was none. The girl had fainted.

A quarter of an hour had passed before she came to. She dressed somehow and crept along the alleyway and up the saloon stairs, swaying and thinking that it was the ship that swayed. She staggered out on the promenade deck, and held to the rails, wondering dazedly at the silence, and refusing to realize what it meant. The deck was lighted by a few electric lamps. Beyond the ship it was very dark. She could just distinguish seven boats passing out of the lee of the rocks to the high sea beyond. She thought she had counted seven; but looking again she saw only six. The next count made them five. Presently there were none.

She did not remember running round the promenade deck, looking for some one to help her bear the horror. She found herself on the boat deck, calling the captain. When he did not answer, she admitted to herself that every one had gone—even the prisoner who had been kept on the top deck, out of sight of the passengers. The bars of his prison were broken, and his prison clothing lay strewn about. He had evidently thought that some one else's apparel would be a better introduction where he was going.

She measured the clothing with her eye. He must have been a huge man; as big as—*the man who was coming up the steps*—a man she had never seen before! . . . They said that the offense was murder! . . . For the second time in her life she fainted.

She found herself upon a hard couch in the 'prison.' The man was holding her up and putting brandy to her lips. He had turned on a light, and she scrutinized him under her blinking eyelids. He was an extraordinarily large, powerful young fellow, with a strong jaw, and large nose, and lips that set in a stern line; a good-looking man, she would have thought, if she had thought of his looks, but she only considered the character that his appearance indicated. Hard and cruel, she decided, but not coarse. Thank Heaven, not coarse! . . . She must find a weapon to protect herself. Meanwhile she must not let him know that she suspected his identity, or he would murder *her!* She shivered and drew a shuddering breath.

"Better now?" he asked. His voice was pleasant, and neither too rough nor too familiar. It took a small percentage from her fears. At any rate he *had* been a gentleman.

"Yes," she said feebly, "I am better."

He put a cushion and a pillow behind her and removed his arm.

"I am even more sorry for you than for myself," he remarked. "But I think there is hope. I do, really."

"Is any one else left on board?" she inquired. He shook his head. "Why did you stay?"

"I thought I stood a better chance here," he stated; and the last hope that

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he was not the murderer went from her mind. It would have been useless for him to escape with those who knew him, of course. "The boats were overloaded, and I did not think they could live in this sea. We will hope that I was wrong."

"They went down!" she cried, with a sob. "I saw them."

"So did I," he admitted. "I didn't want to worry you, if you didn't know."

They were silent for some time.

"How were you left behind?" he inquired at length.

"I fainted. If I hadn't——" She twitched.

"It was for the best, it seems," he remarked.

"It seems so." She shuddered violently. It would have been better to go down with the others; perhaps, she thought —but he must have been a gentleman once. Perhaps he would not harm her.

"It is funny that we have never spoken before," she said. It would look suspicious, if she did not say something of the kind, she considered.

"Not so funny," he answered. "I was not a first-class passenger. I had been careless of my money, and I wouldn't write to the governor for more. Afterwards I wished that I had. I—I 'felt my position acutely,' as they say in the police-court reports."

The police courts! He must have mentioned them to test whether she suspected him, she decided. She tried to laugh carelessly; and then the ship lurched, shifting upon the rock that held it, and she screamed.

"We are going down!" she cried.

"No, no," he declared. "I don't think so; but come below, and I'll find a life-belt for you."

He supported her down the steps to the promenade deck and put her in a chair.

"We are jammed on a rock," he explained, "and I believe we shall stick there till the gale goes down, and then we shall be all right. But we'll have belts, as an additional safeguard."

He went off with a long stride. She clasped and unclasped her hands, but would not let herself shudder till he left the deck. Then she thought of going below another way, and seeking for a revolver; but she feared meeting him; and, besides, a revolver was useless to her. She did not know how to load it—had never handled one even. There was only one course. She must conceal her suspicions and her aversions and move his better feelings by pretended trust in him.

He seemed gone a long while. Doubtless he was rifling the cabins of their valuables! His arms were full when he came at last; but the valuables were all for her.

"Here is a rug," he said, "and a cushion; and if you put on this coat it will stop the shivering. I've brought a life-belt, but you won't want it; and here is something to eat and drink." He gave her sandwiches and lemonade, and took some himself. "Now we have broken bread together," he remarked. "Will you believe me that my faith is pledged to do my best for you? I can see that you're half afraid of me. I'm such a lump of a chap!" He grinned apologetically.

"Oh, no!" she said hastily. "Oh, no! I—I will do my best, too."

He held out his hand. She put hers in it—what a terrible, strong hand it was!—and managed to repress a scream. The hand she held had killed his wife, according to the ship's gossip!

"Now," he said cheerfully, "let's make our plans. The sea is going down. It will probably be quite calm in the morning. We can't rely upon the ship sticking here. We had better make a raft, and carry all that we can upon it, and get to land—if those rocks may be called 'land.' We can rig up tents and make ourselves comfortable Robinson Crusoes. But I suppose I am Man Friday! Man Friday turned out pretty faithful, you remember, though Robinson Crusoe mistrusted him for a long while."

He laughed. The thought that he could laugh with *that* on his mind struck her suddenly; and she burst into hysterical tears. He watched her gravely, looking a trifle pale.

"While you mistrust Man Friday," he said, "you shall have an island to yourself. You can't reasonably mistrust him now, with the fear of death before his eyes! I'll put you on one rock and go off to another. That's a solemn promise. Now, don't cry."

He spoke very gently, and she felt a sudden sympathy for him. A man, she thought, might commit one great crime without being wholly bad; and it must be terrible to be cut off from the trust of

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every one. If he had only killed a man, she felt that she could almost trust him; but they said it was a woman! She would have her separate island; but she would not hurt his feelings more than she could help.

"Don't you think," she pleaded, "that it is very terrifying to a girl to be left like this? With an entire stranger? You have been very kind. Please make allowances for me."

He nodded slowly.

"Try to sleep while I make the raft," he said, and went away. She intended to keep awake and watch him; but she slept from sheer exhaustion for over an hour. Just after she roused, the ship's lights went out suddenly. She forgot her fear of him in her fear of the darkness, and sat up and screamed till he came running to her.

"It's all right," he called from afar. "The electricity has failed. That's all. It will soon be daylight. Don't be frightened."

"I *am* frightened!" she called desperately. "Frightened to be alone; frightened of you; frightened of everything!"

He came and stood two or three yards away.

"It will be quite light in half an hour," he asserted. "You can see it coming on the other side. Will you walk round and look at it?"

"No!" she gasped. "No!"

"Shall I go?" he asked, with a touch of irritation.

"No!" she almost screamed. "No!"

She felt safer while he was under her eye, though he looked huge and terrible in the semi-darkness. Besides, she was afraid to be alone; and he evidently did not mean to harm her at present; and perhaps not at all. She was mad to let him know her fears.

"Please be generous," she begged. "I am quite unstrung. You are kindness itself to me. I hope I shall be more sensible and helpful to-morrow— It is 'to-morrow' now, isn't it?" She tried to speak brightly. "It *is* lighter, I think. Let's go and look on the other side."

They walked round the promenade together, and watched the dawn come. The clouds were whitened underneath, and the whiteness grew to a blaze; and then the rim of the sun came up.

"Here is to-morrow," he said. "Come and select your island."

She thought that there was a touch of banter in his tone, as if he imagined that her fear of him had passed; and her dread returned with a rush.

"Yes," she said steadily. "We will choose our islands."

They walked back to their original side, and surveyed the rocks. Most of them were small peaks, with scarcely standing room. Two were larger than the rest. One had a flat space of perhaps twenty feet by ten on top, and a number of lesser ledges at the side. The other was twice as large, and had a small sandy cove. They were both about a quarter of a mile from the ship, and about two hundred yards apart.

"They are the only two of any use," he pronounced. "We must get ready. I had half made the raft before the lights went out. I can get it into the water astern. The bulwarks are smashed there. Will you go and collect property? Food, water or mineral waters, blankets, a couple of beds— but they'll be too heavy for you. I'll fetch them. Anything that will be useful."

She gathered armfuls of articles and brought them to the place where he was making the raft. She even managed to carry a bed. He ran to meet her when he saw her staggering under the load, and fetched the second bed himself. She almost wished that she had not guessed his identity, for she did not believe that he meant any harm to her, and he was pleasant company and had almost a good face when he smiled. She could not think how he could smile so cheerfully. That he could smile at all was the most horrible thing of all!

She cooked some breakfast, set it out on a tray and carried it to the place where he was working, and they sat down and ate it. Shortly after breakfast he completed the raft; a curious structure of barrels and spars and planks, lashed securely together. They had a long struggle together to get it into the water, and once or twice she laughed unaware. It was difficult to remember horrible things in the bright sunshine, with one's blood warmed cheerfully by hard work. The raft splashed overboard at last, and he hauled it to the side by the ropes which he had fastened to it. It rose and fell gently, like a boat by a pier.

"I will let you down first," he proposed. "Then I can lower the things to you, and you can stack them. Put the heaviest in

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the center of the raft, and tie them on with string whenever you can."

He fastened a life-belt round her, for fear of any accident, and let her down by a rope tied under her arms. Then he passed down their provisions and stores. He ran off for some minutes and brought back a lot of canvas and two long poles. He would make tents with them, he explained. Then he went off again. She fingered a knife that lay upon the raft, and considered whether she should cut it adrift, but she decided that she could not do that. He had stayed upon the dangerous ship hours after he could have made a raft large enough for himself; and if she stole it and the ship went down before he could make another, he would be drowned; and there were no more planks, he said, and no more rope small enough for lashings. *She* would be a murderer, if she did that . . . She could have liked the man, if he hadn't been that.

She sat and shivered till he reappeared. He brought a lady's cloak and a lady's mackintosh, for her, and a brush and comb and hand-mirror. Her voice broke as she thanked him. It must be pleasant to him to be his better self to someone whom he thought ignorant of the past. She felt sorry for him, as well as afraid of him. That was the most horrible thing of all—that one could like the man.

He slid down to the raft and set it free, leaving the rope dangling—in case he wished to go aboard again, he explained cheerfully. He seemed very cheerful; almost gay.

The raft was so fully loaded that they could scarcely stand. He told her to sit on their property, and hold on to the loose things, while he sculled with a single oar. She laughed unaware again at his efforts, and when something fell overboard. She cried out to him not to let her float off alone when he jumped ashore in the sandy cove, pushing the raft off a little. He waded in the water and pulled the raft in and helped her off, so that she should not wet her feet.

"That's the jolliest boating trip I ever had!" he declared, wiping his forehead with his handkerchief.

"It was very jolly," she agreed; and then her horror came upon her like a chill.

They carried two-thirds of the property ashore. Then he held up his hand to stop.

"The rest is my share," he said, and paused. It was evident enough that he did not wish to go. She did him the justice to think that, if she had been old and ugly, he would not have wished to leave her on this deserted rock alone. She could scarcely have said that she *wished* him to leave; but she felt that it must be. Nothing else was possible.

"You haven't kept a fair half," she said at last. "Let me help you put some back."

He flushed quickly; and then went rather white. It was clear that he had not expected that she would let him go, when it came to the point. She half expected that he would show his violence now; but he only shook his head.

"I can get more from the ship," he said. "You can't. Shall I frighten you if I bring you more some morning?"

The hurt in his voice was very plain; and the girl felt a great compassion for him.

"Perhaps," she suggested, "you would call for me when you are going to the ship. I—I know that I must seem very ungrateful; very foolish. I *am* foolish, of course, but—I *don't* believe you would harm me. I—Oh! I *don't!* It is only—I can't explain my absurdity—— You will come for me, when you are going to the ship, won't you?"

"I should prefer that you did not go upon the ship again," he told her. "There is a certain risk, of course. She lurched several times this morning. I will call on the way back."

He set his lips firmly. He *did* look a fierce man, she decided, and she would be glad when he had gone. She carried her property up the beach and stowed it away while he put up her tent. He came and helped her then, but neither spoke till they had finished. Then he bowed, and was turning away; but she touched his arm.

"Let me thank you," she said. "Thank you—— oh! Very much! You must have some tea before you go." He shook his head. "Please! Out of your generosity." He shook his head again. "Because I want you to, then?" He looked at her. "Yes. I *do*."

He nodded and helped her make the tea; but he seemed unable to find words till he was going.

"I was thinking," he said then, "that you would feel safer if you had the raft. I will teach you to manage it. You can scull me over to—to Man Friday's Island, and scull yourself back. Then"—his voice

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sharpened angrily—"I shall be effectually cut off."

If he had stopped before the last sentence the girl would probably have taken the desperate resolution to trust him. She was frightened of being left alone; and she believed that, whatever he had done, he was at heart a gentleman. He certainly had behaved well to her; and she was very troubled about hurting his feelings. But the note of anger in his voice terrified her.

"I do not mistrust you," she said; "and I have every reason to be deeply grateful to you. I thank you for your offer. It is very—very chivalrous. I accept it."

So she went across with him. She found it easy to scull the raft, as the water was very smooth. He did not speak except to give her the necessary instructions; and he acknowledged her thanks only with a bow when she left. She managed to keep from crying till she was back in her tent. Then she cried a good deal. She was so sorry for him—so very sorry! And she did not like being alone on her island. She kept fancying that she heard noises, and she wished that she had asked him to search it. She decided that she would fetch him to do so the next day. Then she wiped her eyes angrily to think that she was letting herself grow to trust this—this murderer.

"But I believe it wasn't murder—only an accident," she said aloud. She repeated this several times. Then she fell fast asleep, though it was just before sunset, and slept till daylight the next morning.

In the morning she felt more cheerful. When she had had breakfast she embarked upon the raft and sculled over to Man Friday's Island.

"I thought I would show you that I am not afraid of you," she said brightly. "And you will want to go to the ship. *Please* let me come too."

"There is no need for you to take the risk," he said coldly.

"But—but I'm dreadfully lonely," she pleaded. "Do let me come with you."

His face relaxed gradually as he looked at her.

"Very well," he agreed. "You—you spoilt child!"

They spent all the morning loading the raft from the ship. It seemed to be fixed firmly on the rock, so they lunched on board. Then he took the loaded raft to Robinson Crusoe's Island. He insisted on unloading most of the spoil there. At last she jumped on the raft and pushed it a little way from the shore.

"If you won't agree to take all the rest," she threatened, "I'll leave you here, with all the nice things, and go and live on your nasty, poky island."

So he agreed to take the remainder of the load, and they left for Man Friday's Island, after he had searched Robinson Crusoe's so that she might feel quite secure. She did not seem anxious to go back to her loneliness, and invited herself to tea with him. After tea she found herself talking merrily, and almost teasingly, and then she suddenly remembered what he was! He raised his eyebrows at the quick change in her face.

"What is it?" he asked. "Am I not a good enough comrade to trust?"

"You are a good comrade," she said almost solemnly; "and I do trust you, but it is time that I went."

She got upon the raft and he pushed it off. There was a mist in her eyes and, till he shouted to her, she did not notice that a strong current was carrying the raft out of its course. She struggled vainly to control it. When she saw that she would certainly be carried out to the open sea she threw down the oar and screamed to him, holding out her arms. She saw him run to his stores and begin to tie things together. She guessed that he was making another raft. It never occurred to her for a moment that he would hesitate to risk his life by following her. Presently he dragged his little raft to the water, and set out using an oar like a paddle. His craft was just a water-barrel with some planks tied at the sides to steady it. He sat astride upon it with his legs in the water. She remembered that they had seen a shark in the morning, and screamed in terror.

"I don't care what he has done!" she gasped again and again. "I don't care!"

They were far past her island before it came into her head to try to scull toward him. She could not stem the current; but she kept the raft from going so fast; and at last he overtook her, tied his little raft to her big one, and came aboard. She fell on her knees and thanked God; and he took off his cap reverently.

"Amen!" he said.

"Oh!" she cried. "But you have noth-

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ing to be thankful for. You are giving your life for me."

"I am thankful for *that*," he said gravely; and she seized his hand and kissed it!

"In the end," she said, "Robinson Crusoe was very sure that Man Friday was faithful."

"I am glad of that," he said simply.

Then he took up the oar and tried to work their clumsy craft out of the current. As he failed to do so, she took the other oar, and they tried to go against it; but they barely held their own; and after a time she sank on the raft exhausted. He sat down beside her. It was useless to attempt to resist the current alone.

"There's fresh water in the barrel," he announced, "and I filled my pockets with biscuits. I daresay we shall be picked up. Let's have supper—little comrade."

"Big comrade!" she said.

They ate and drank, and even jested, when he held up the big barrel for her to drink. It was very warm, luckily, and the rise and fall of the raft made her sleepy. She laid down with her head on his knee, and slept peacefully. She felt safer than she had felt the night before. Once she cried out in her sleep and he stroked her hair. She half woke, smiled at him, and clutched his wrist.

"It's all right, little Miss Crusoe," he said.

"It's—all right—Man Friday," she murmured drowsily. Then she went to sleep again.

Presently the moon came out. He started and shook her shoulder.

"The current has changed!" he cried. "We are nearly back to your island!"

The girl sat up and looked round.

"*Our* island," she said very gently.

He stood up and sculled vigorously, and she assisted him for little spells. They ran into the cove in the moonlight, and she helped him pull the raft up.

They were too elated to sleep. So they sat on a big lump of rock side by side, with the water lapping at their feet, and talked; and for once the man said most. The girl grew gradually silent, and listened to him telling of school and college, and "the dear old dad and mater at home," and how they would welcome them; for he seemed to assume that she would go with him. She gave a sudden sob; lifted his hand and kissed it fiercely.

"Forgive me," she begged. "Forgive me! When I remember that—that I misjudged you—I was mad, of course!"

She *must* have been mad to imagine that he was the prisoner, she told herself; quite mad.

"Oh, little girl!" he begged. "Don't do that again. If you do you'll send *me* mad; and I shall ask—what I mean to ask as soon as we are rescued!"

Their shoulders were touching as they sat; and the girl's seemed to drop against his.

"And I shall answer what I mean to answer then!" she said . . . "Oh! Man Friday—Man Friday!"

They were on Robinson Crusoe's Island for three weeks after that; and, looking back, they always say that the time was too short. They spent the first day moving things from his island to hers. "A ship might come any time," she said, "and she *couldn't* have any one else know that she half mistrusted her Man Friday at first! It really was only 'half' she assured him, and there was *no* reason for it. It was just nerves. She did not like telling him an untruth; but she would not hurt him by confession; and she resolved to make up for it by never telling him even a little fib about anything else. She never has; and she never will.

The next eight or nine days were mainly occupied in fetching things from the ship. After that there was heavy weather for a time; and one night the ship disappeared. Then they busied themselves in constructing a flagstaff and putting it up on their island. A couple of days later a ship saw it, and sent a boat in for them; and several more boats when they discovered their multitude of possessions—which gained them a handsome sum of salvage afterwards.

"You were a very lucky pair of Robinson Crusoes," the captain of the ship told them.

"*I* am Robinson Crusoe," the girl observed. "*He* is Man Friday!"

"And I suppose you are going to be a pair of Fridays?" the Captain suggested. "Well, you were lucky in your Man Friday. He might have been—Well, you had a ruffian on board going to be tried for murder, I believe. If your Man Friday had turned out to be *him*—!"

The girl's lover looked at her quickly. For the first and last time a suspicion of the reason of her fear of him crossed his unsuspicious mind; but the girl's indignant face dispelled it for ever; and the sudden pressure of her hand on his arm.

"My Man Friday couldn't turn out to be anything wrong," she said proudly. "I wonder—I *wonder* if you have any idea how good he always was to me? My Man Friday!"

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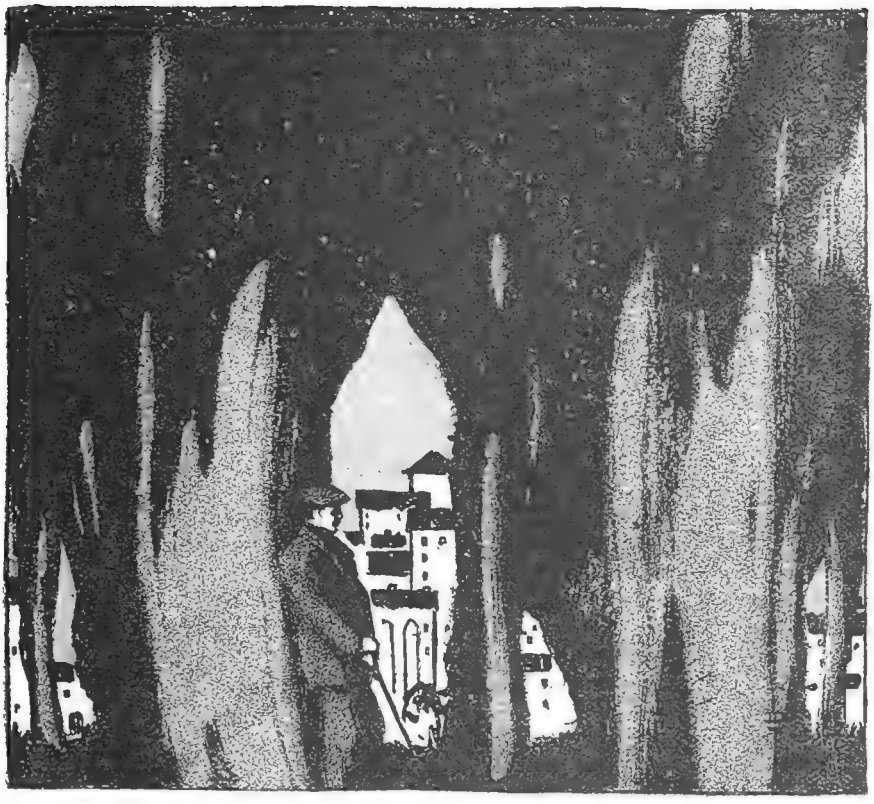

CAN A MAN BE TRUE

by Winifred Graham

author of "The Vision at the Savoy"

CHAPTER I

A STRANGER'S MISSION

MORTIMORE DUGDALE looked typically English as he walked down the broad boulevard which formed the principal thoroughfare of Lambasa. To-day the fashionable promenade appeared deserted. Smart carriages and brilliant uniforms, which usually congregated at this hour, were conspicuous by their absence. Drawn blinds shaded every window, while the few inhabitants abroad wore unrelieved black, walking with bowed heads, and eyes downcast, for this city of brilliant sunshine, with its snowy buildings and luxuriant greenery, mourned a dead king.

The stranger from England had already explored the poorer quarters of the town, where low-eaved, vine-trellised houses lined narrow, cobbled streets, and was impressed by the squalor and poverty the open doors revealed. It was a relief to return to the airy boulevard, and rest a while in the courtyard of an inviting café, under a massive palm tree. The glare had tired his eyes, and he was warm from his long walk to the suburbs. Here he hoped the wines of the country would prove less villainous than those he had sampled on his journey to the

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capital. A waiter, with a suitable expression of woe, took his order, returned promptly and pointed to an old stone fountain in the center of the small court-yard, as he filled the visitor's glass.

"It does not play, sir," he murmured sadly. "Not any more until our new King is crowned."

Dugdale looked toward the golden domes of the palace, where soon he would witness the young monarch's lying in state, a last court to be held in the mortuary chamber of the illustrious dead. Farther away, the cathedral spire marked the burial place of Lambasa's royal house.

"The country has suffered a great loss," said Dugdale, "for it seems death robbed you of one who was really beloved."

"Indeed," murmured the waiter, drawing nearer to the small three-legged table, "he will never be replaced, our dear young King, Maldio the Thinker. Ah, you did not know he was so named by the people? Though such a boy in years, he thought always of others, he thought of their wrongs, he listened to the cry of distress, he promised many reforms. At last we were to be happy. The day of redemption had come, for his disposition was humane. His subjects loved him, and he meant well by them. It was his personal charm, too, you understand, Monsieur, and the pleasant manner, combined with the kindly feeling, that won our whole-hearted devotion. And then to die, without hint of illness, without warning, just as we were celebrating his nineteenth birthday! The bells chimed, the flags flew, all was gay for an evening fête, and during the morning he would have reviewed his troops in the open square!"

The speaker shivered with sudden emotion and, with a serviette dangling from his elbow, dried the tears that gathered in his eyes.

Mortimore Dugdale turned to a paper lying beside his glass; tears in the eyes of men were antagonistic to his English spirit.

"Is there any explanation yet of the King's death?" he asked, scanning the head lines of the black-edged journal. "So far it seems to be shrouded in mystery?"

The waiter shrugged his shoulders.

"The doctors say a sudden heart collapse; they are puzzled and cannot trace the cause. But the people declare: 'Enough that King Maldio is dead! No power can bring him back; it is the will of God.'"

The paper displayed on its front sheet a large head and shoulders of the late King. Bright, speaking eyes looked out fearlessly from a handsome face of faultless mold and feature. The thick hair framed a brow which justified his name of "Maldio the Thinker." The picture gave an impression of such natural vivacity that it almost seemed to live. The mouth expressed strength of character and a certain inward purity, which spiritualized and refined the manly visage, while the kingly bearing was dignified yet free from arrogance.

Below, two smaller portraits of the dead boy's stepmother and her son were given. Dugdale looked curiously at the prince who would now ascend the throne, and at the woman who had borne him. The Englishman knew well the reputation for cruelty and vice held by the Queen Mother throughout the civilized world. He had seen pictures before of this notorious woman, but never one which so emphasized the evil in her heavy, square-jawed face. With horror he noted the repulsive lips and bulging eyes.

"The print is bad," said the waiter, who still lingered by the stranger. Then glancing round that none might hear, he whispered cautiously, "But the Queen is yet more bad."

Dugdale raised his eyebrows, surprised at the man's daring speech. He shrewdly suspected that the feeling against the Queen Mother was strong: he scented revolution in the air.

The black-coated figure made an involuntary movement of disgust, and flicked fiercely at the flies buzzing round the Englishman's glass:

"Openly she is all sorrow, monsieur,—wailing and crying and" (here he bit his lip) "and making preparations for the coronation of her own son, Prince Gisdel. Is it not monstrous that before our dear saint, the champion of the people, the beloved Maldio, is cold in his coffin, she is planning the fêtes, the honors, the engagements of that weak, dissipated youth, whom we are to serve and obey? His policy is governed entirely by Queen Horatia. We shall be under her rule, and she is without pity or justice, a monster of crime."

The voice of scorn was no longer lowered, and the flashing eyes grew bloodshot now, sending out strange, uncanny lights. Beneath his ill-fitting clothes there was some-

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thing of the soldier in this man of reckless speech and fierce hatred.

"I wonder," said Dugdale, "you are not afraid to express your opinions so openly."

The man smiled bitterly, and drew in his breath.

"I am not the only one," he replied, and the words held significance. "Besides, monsieur is English, and we, as a nation, have great faith in your people, so free and so strong. Here it is all different—especially when a tyrant rules."

Dugdale rose and took a coin from his pocket.

"Don't trouble to bring change," he said, as he turned to go.

The tip was a large one and the man flushed with pleasure.

"Monsieur will come back another day?" cried the eager voice, accompanied by a profound bow.

Dugdale nodded, lit a cigarette, and strolled away. He had intended staying longer in the refreshing shade of the café, but for private reasons it did not suit him to be seen conversing with a revolutionary spirit. He thought, as he walked in the direction of the palace, how those keen eyes would have kindled with sudden fire had the communicative waiter known Mortimore Dugdale's mission. Outwardly he was just an ordinary tourist, with perhaps a rather more distinguished air than the average globe-trotter who rarely invaded this somewhat isolated state. A man of perhaps eight and thirty, he held himself very erect and gave the impression of cold reserve.

In reality, this apparent loafer was no mere pleasure-seeker or curious spectator drawn by the bait of a royal funeral. He arrived by chance in the capital just as the young King's sudden and mysterious death plunged the country into extraordinary wo. Of late certain rumors of inconceivable brutality hailed from Lambasa to scandalize Europe, causing such indignant horror that England decided to send a Secret Service agent on a journey of investigation. Dugdale stood pledged to discover whether sentence of death were passed without trial; whether visitors to the capital had mysteriously disappeared, and whether it were true that political offenders had been subjected to barbarous torture, at the instigation of the Queen Mother.

As yet it seemed unlikely that any one suspected the object of his visit. Certainly the waiter who, like thousands of his countrymen, dreaded the coming rule of Prince Gisdel, little dreamed he was airing his views to a paid spy on the warpath of discovery.

To Dugdale's shrewd mind the unexpected death of the young King looked strangely ominous. Queen Horatia's dark record rose up lurid and accusing to heighten his conjectures. He remembered that King Maldio, against her wish, insisted on going to England to study at Cambridge and receive the refining influence of a British education. On his return, in consultation with his ministers, he drew up a new code of laws, to which his stepmother showed violent opposition. In her eyes their humanity spelt weakness. The change would have made it impossible for her to influence state affairs, which were previously so primitive that the ruled became practically the slaves of their rulers.

Just as her power was about to be overthrown, the stepchild she hated fell dead from a sudden seizure, leaving the crown to the son she adored, the petted, home-taught, overbearing and brainless Gisdel.

Mortimore Dugdale stroked his chin reflectively, as he listened to the continual tolling of the city bells.

"It looks ugly, very ugly!" he thought, and his eyes rested pensively on the domes of the palace, standing out now against a crimson sunset, which bathed the snow-white city in blood-red rays.

"To-morrow," he said, "I shall view the dead face, and a dead face can tell nothing!"

CHAPTER II

"THE BODY MOVES"

AS THE visitor from England prepared to start on his lugubrious visit to the palace, the hotel proprietress informed him she had seen the dead monarch earlier in the morning.

"I knew the crowd would be great all day," she said, "so I went there when the public were first admitted. Until four o'clock the people may witness the lying-in-state. Ah, monsieur, the majesty of that handsome boy in death—the wonder of his face, so fair, so kingly, so exquisite, will give you a great emotion! For myself, I cry all day—and I think, too, of the lady in Eng-

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land they say he loved, and my heart aches for her!"

She sighed deeply, drawing her long black shawl closely around her shoulders.

Mortimore Dugdale had heard as yet no mention of the young King's romance, and his sudden air of interest and sympathy drew Madame Machin to tell him what she knew.

"Monsieur will understand that with royalty nothing is secret. The servants of the King's household reported that when he returned from England he spoke to the Queen Mother of a young and beautiful lady who had enslaved his fancy. He wished her to be received as a guest at the palace, and in a fit of boyish impetuosity swore, that if he willed, a commoner should share his throne. He brought a portrait of the favored one to hang in the palace, and she was so fair that the Queen had great dread, and in order to make him forget, caused the picture to be burned. You may guess that that was the subject of a big quarrel, and afterward our dear young King appeared to pine and grow melancholy, though he never spoke her name again in the presence of his stepmother. Some say it was love that killed him—that because of an unsatisfied passion, he wasted away and his heart broke. But if monsieur delays, the crowd will be so great he may not see the body, and it would be a thousand pities to miss such a great and impressive spectacle. I trust that we shall have the honor of your presence here still when Lambasa grows gay for the coronation of Prince Gisdel. He is not like our Maldio, but the festivities will be good for trade and well worth seeing."

A perpetual stream of spectators thronged the gates and Dugdale joined the long line of black-clothed figures. At a slow melancholy march, shoulder to shoulder with curious, half frightened citizens, he passed the sentries and reached a monumental staircase of wide marble steps, leading to a hall glittering with gold and mosaics. For a moment the lavish decorations seemed to awe the many sightseers, and the vast mass of mourners paused involuntarily, shy, bewildered, dazzled by the splendor of their surroundings. Even to Mortimore, accustomed to courts, the orgy of color came as a surprise.

With the trained glance of a quick observer he took in every detail, without appearing to look up. Portraits of Maldio and Gisdel hung side by side on the high walls. The painter had cleverly depicted upon the two faces the stamp of a good and of a weak character; the dead King appeared smiling upon his subjects from the massive frame, while his stepbrother wore the fretful frown of a spoiled child. Farther on, a life-sized painting of Queen Horatia, with her late husband, looked scornfully down on the moving crowd, with narrow, soulless eyes in which the inborn greed of her nature could be clearly read.

In painful contrast to these halls of light, through which the moving multitude passed was the dark room hung in black, illuminated only by the misty glow of numberless huge candles, where Maldio slept his last sleep. An awe-inspiring silence hung like a cloud over the death-chamber.

As they entered, the man next to Dugdale whispered to a friend: "That is Count Bistoff, the court physician, he was with the King when he died."

Simultaneously the speaker indicated an elderly man standing with his back to the wall, watching the procession with doleful eyes. He bore the weary air of one who had stood for long hours in the gloomy apartment, guarding his King to the end. Dugdale took a swift, searching look at the Count's features, which were so stamped by sorrow they appeared as a mask of inscrutable wo. As if drawn by Dugdale's interrogating glance, the deep-set eyes of the physician met those of the Englishman for one brief moment.

Strong man that Dugdale was, the history mirrored in Bistoff's eyes suddenly unnerved him. In their slumbering fires a world of mystifying pain and horror lay revealed. In the ashen face Mortimore could read the knowledge of some hidden crime, against which the soul beneath seethed in silent rebellion. Only for a second had he time to scan that form of saintly strength, which burst upon him like a revelation, carrying a message straight to his soul. Then he moved on toward the coffin, draped with a black and silver cloth, and headed by an upright cross of massive silver. Eight officers stood motionless, sword in hand, like statues, by the King's bier. A row of nuns and three pallid priests knelt in prayer as the crowd passed, each person pausing momentarily for one farewell look at the royal corpse beneath the coffin-lid of the glass.

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The rigid boyish figure lay dressed in full uniform, his breast decorated with medals and dazzling orders set with priceless jewels. The folded white hands might have been modeled in wax, and the heavy rings seemed weighing down the limp dead fingers with a last burden of earthly splendor. On the crimson tunic a great diamond star flashed its rays from the lifeless form, the blazing stones seeming to defy the fact that death was all powerful and supreme.

Dugdale gazed spellbound at the exquisite purity of the still set face. Then suddenly he felt as if his whole soul called to the departed spirit, demanding an answer. The moving crowd saw only in the gorgeously attired body a king struck down by the hand of God, but the Englishman believed he was looking at a murdered boy, robbed of his earthly existence by the hand of man. The mass of people waiting their turn fancied the tall Britisher was some distinguished stranger, and patiently permitted him more than his allotted moment. As he bent reverently down to scan the ashen features of surpassing beauty, he thought the impressive mortuary chamber, the thronging multitudes, the flickering candles, must all be part of some wild dream, for even as he looked upon that striking face beneath the coffin lid he noticed a faint, a very faint, twitching of the lips! Starting visibly, he bent lower to the glass, fearing he had been deceived, and simultaneously the eyelids of the dead King quivered.

In that brief second of intense overwhelming excitement, Mortimore Dugdale forgot his surroundings, forgot everything but the thrilling discovery that life still reigned in the body prepared for burial. There might not be a moment to lose, and with a strong fist which braved the sharp cut of the blow, he smashed the glass just above the diamond star, to let in an immediate current of air.

"The King lives!" he cried. "I saw him move his lips—his eyes! Lift him up! Bring restoratives——"

The words were loud and commanding as the speaker continued to break now with his elbow the thick glass which shielded a further portion of the body he sought to save.

The quick action, the thrilling order, the apparent desecration of the kingly corpse, struck terror to the hearts of all assembled. The kneeling priests and nuns sprang to their feet, the guards leaped forward and roughly seized the daring stranger who had ventured to molest the dead, and disturb the solemnity of that royal lying-in-state.

"He is a maniac! He tried to rob the body!"—the words passed from mouth to mouth—"He says the King lives—he is a liar—or mad—he is a thief, an assassin! Kill him—but not here, not in the sacred chamber of the departed! Tear him limb from limb outside! Has he not broken the coffin-lid, has he not, before our very eyes, sought to drag the dead Maldio from his bier?"

Men wrung their hands and wailed like distracted women, even the strong guards turned deathly pale as they regarded their motionless King still lying upon his pillows of priceless lace—undisturbed!

"Call the physicians! Try artificial respiration! For God's sake don't delay!" cried Dugdale as he tried to free himself. "Surely you want to save your King! I tell you he moved twice! Clear the room and open the windows—I know what to do—I have brought people round before! Let go my arms, you fools, and get to work!"

He spoke loudly in their own language, he shouted the words fiercely now, struggling to throw off the detaining hands of his slow-witted captors. To his intense relief, Dugdale saw that Count Bistoff had moved quickly to the coffin and was looking down at the form below the broken lid with anxious eyes. But why in the name of all that was mysterious did this man of medicine make no effort to complete Dugdale's work? Surely that saintly faced, courtly individual could not have aided and abetted in the murder of the King?

As the procession of alarmed spectators vanished in unseemly haste from the darkened chamber a side door opened and Queen Horatia appeared with quick step and fear-stricken eyes. She had been told the coffin-lid was broken, that a stranger swore the King lived, and now she gazed in terror, open-mouthed and shivering, at the body of her stepson, as if confronted by a ghost.

"It is false!" she muttered, turning to Count Bistoff with an air of haughty rebuke. "You will prove that easily enough, you, as the King's own physician, can testify and swear life is extinct and hope dead. This stranger has made an utterly absurd statement, calculated to unsettle the populace. He must have come here merely to

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create a scene for some deep reason of his own."

The sad-eyed Bistoff bowed his head, as he placed his hand beneath the broken lid, to feel the heart which no longer beat perceptibly. Then in low reverent accents he answered Queen Horatia:

"The King is dead, your Majesty. We must resign ourselves to the bitter loss, we must give our much-loved monarch into the keeping of a higher power."

A momentary expression of relief passed over the Queen's hard features. Then she turned with all the fierceness of a wild animal and shot a look of bitter scorn at the astonished Dugdale.

"Your conduct," she muttered in low, hissing accents, "is easily explained. You hoped to cause so grave a panic that in the general confusion the dead might be robbed with impunity! I see the whole hideous plot. You suggested artificial respiration—you would doubtless have offered assistance. The rings are loose on the King's hands. His fingers have shrunk in death. You came for prey,—but you came in vain and, now you are here—we shall detain you. A thieves' dungeon is too good for such a vile conspirator!"

A deep flood of crimson dyed the heavily moulded cheeks, and beneath the black crêpe of her bodice her breast rose and fell in violent agitation.

Dugdale listened, bewildered by the unjust accusation.

"Madame," he said, "for the disturbance caused I humbly apologize, but that I am no robber, or common conspirator, I can very easily prove. I swear, as surely as I stand before you, that as I looked on the dead face, certain signs of life revealed themselves so clearly that to bury the King without further investigation would be criminal indeed. You must know there is such a thing as suspended animation—that people have come to life after lying in a deathlike trance for days. I can declare on oath that his lips moved first, and then his eyelids quivered. I am not imaginative; I have never been the slave of fancy. Where life and death are concerned, it is impossible to respect court etiquette or weigh the wisdom of a sudden action. I only knew that the body moved; that was enough for me. Surely I am believed! Your Majesty is not serious in mistaking me for a robber. I have papers to prove my identity."

As he poured out the words of defense, it maddened him to see the scornful attitude still retained by this woman of steel. When he spoke of the young King and the possibility of reviving him, a look of intense disdain, tinged by a certain bitter amusement, passed over the graceless features, accompanied by a shrug of stout shoulders, and a mocking gesture. Once she turned to Count Bistoff, as if to demand his support, but he kept his eyes on the ground, standing rigidly beside her, like a soldier at attention. From his attitude he might have been deaf and blind, or merely a statue, devoid of all human life and emotion.

"Your identity," replied the stern Horatia, looking Dugdale up and down with an imperious air, "matters little to me. It is sufficient that you took this solemn occasion to gain access to the palace and make an onslaught upon the dead body of the King. Naturally you seek to save yourself by a tissue of lies, calculated to spread abroad the vile theory that we should allow our adored Maldio to be buried alive! Count Bistoff has examined the body fully, and proclaims that death is assured. We are more inclined to believe the first physician in Lambasa than a scoundrel who comes as a disturber of our peace. We shall deal with you according to our rights and mete out the punishment so richly deserved!"

Turning to the guard, she gave a command with all the assurance of some great general at the head of his troops:

"Take that man to the prison house and keep him in chains until further orders!"

The words, as they fell on Dugdale's ears, appeared like some echo from medieval times. Could this possibly be the speech of a twentieth-century queen, in a modern palace, fitted with all the luxury of present-day living?

In a flash the awful rumors circulating through Europe rushed back to his mind, chilling his blood and momentarily stopping the fast beat of his now sinking heart. He had come upon a mission of discovery—was he to discover the worst, and never perhaps return to testify against his false accusers or bring them to justice? If he were cast into prison, all his private papers at the hotel would be seized, and a close survey of their contents would undoubtedly prove he had come to the country in no friendly spirit. At least Queen Horatia should not say she had caused him to fear.

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"Madame," he answered, "if injustice is done to me, remember that I am a British subject and you will have to answer to Great Britain for to-day's work."

She made no reply, but signed to the guards to withdraw their prisoner. Roughly the men forced Dugdale to turn and leave her presence without another word.

As he passed through the high-arched doorway he glanced back over his shoulder and saw the white-faced Bistoff stationed still, an impressive figure, by the tall, pitiless Queen. For the first time the Count looked up—and the Englishman fancied he read a message mysterious in the physician's eyes! Surely they were the eyes of a friend, seeking to save Horatia's victim, already secretly plotting the deliverance of an innocent and misjudged man. Yet if Bistoff were indeed the saint he appeared, if his strong features were those of an upright, spotless character, why had he not tried to resurrect the King? Could he be base enough to see Maldio buried alive, fearing to bring upon himself the censure of this all-powerful and vindictive woman?

Such petrifying thoughts beset Dugdale's bewildered brain as the guards hurried him away. As they passed through the impressive palace, he repeated emphatically his burning words of self-defense, warning them that their King had lived undoubtedly at that not distant moment and might still be living now.

The leader, a tall, burly man, laughed scoffingly at the words, and with a shake of his head dealt the speaker a blow upon the mouth.

"That is the way we serve the blasphemer who would outrage a monarch on his bier!" he replied with an oath, looking round for the approval of his fellow soldiers, who watched with admiring eyes. "Here in Lambasa we are not easily deceived by a lying scoundrel from a distant land."

Once again the insulted Englishman warned his assailant, as he had warned the Queen, that Great Britain would avenge these insults.

The man who had struck him laughed long and loudly at the words: "Great Britain," he jeered; "where is Great Britain, my friend? Just round the corner, ah—waiting to gobble us up? Don't you realize, my brave Englishman, that outside the palace no living soul is ever likely to learn the fate of the man who dared to lay hands on Lambasa's dead King? You may whistle long and loudly for your precious country! The dungeon walls are thick, and punishment here is swift—especially if the Queen be offended! She will wipe you from her path like a fly from a jam-pot. Poof!—and you will be gone to heaven or hell, according to your deserts."

The words appeared to cause much amusement to the soldiers, as they mentioned under their breath the names of several victims who had suffered secret punishment.

"There's your future residence, my Lord," jeered a scoffing voice, as the narrow prison house, with its iron bars and small slit windows, loomed in sight.

At the door of this gloomy and solid building a sentry kept watch. He manifested no surprise at the appearance of the guard conducting their well-dressed prisoner to the filthy lodging, ill ventilated and dark, from which a damp, unhealthy odor issued.

"Those doors are firm, but not firm enough in the Queen's opinion," said the commander, with his brutal laugh. "The order was that the prisoner should be chained. Bring the ankle-irons and the handcuffs."

So fierce a wave of indignation swept over Dugdale that suddenly he felt the strength of ten men rising within him. He was in no mood to calculate the risks of a last wild fight for freedom. Once the chains held him fast, retaliation would be impossible. To submit to such an indignity without one last desperate effort to escape appeared unworthy of his race. The men were off their guard, conscious of superior strength in numbers and of the height of the spiked walls surrounding the palace. They had safely secured their prey, and nothing short of a miracle could deliver him from their hands.

The sentry, a yokel from the country, appeared on friendly terms with his superiors and, after saluting, commenced to gossip, as if military etiquette were an unknown quantity in this strangely ruled land.

The interest which the news aroused gave Dugdale his momentary opportunity. Whirling round, he wrenched his shoulder from two pairs of detaining hands, and with a quick movement sent both warriors sprawling on the ground. Striking out from left to right, he beat his way through the astonished guard before the men had

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time to draw their weapons of defense. The shock of surprise lasted only a second; then hot pursuit followed the prisoner's unexpected onslaught. Bold as the effort proved, Dugdale had not allowed for his ignorance of the ground and the impossibility of passing out without attracting attention. Even running at full speed, his enemies were gaining upon him, several taking short cuts which hemmed in his chances of escape. Wildly they waved aloft long shining knives drawn from heavy cases slung to broad gold belts. A peculiar cry, which Dugdale took to be a signal of warning, rose from their lips with piercing distinctness and brought unexpected forms from every corner. It seemed as if watchmen were lurking in every crevice of the large walled garden, gay with blossoming fruit trees making pink and white avenues of bewildering beauty.

He turned a corner sharply. He had left the gardens of vegetable and fruit for the long stretching lawns and blazing flower beds laid out with exquisite skill to please the eye and soothe the senses. The soldiers were almost at his heels and his hopes died—for the distant gates were closed! Swiftly he doubled and, with blinded eyes ran head foremost into the figure of a man emerging from a side door of the palace.

Breathless and exhausted he looked up to find himself face to face with the court physician. Then the brilliant sky grew dark, the sound of voices became fainter and more confused, as Mortimore Dugdale sank to the ground prostrate and senseless at Bistoff's feet. In an instant the panting guards fell upon their prey, with faces so vindictive that it was well, perhaps, their prisoner could no longer see the scowling brows and cruel eyes of these angry and heated runners. In a moment the heavy irons secured the victim's feet and hands, as he lay face upward to the sun.

The Count bent over him with the same enigmatical expression his face had worn as he stood by the dead King.

He bade the men fetch water, much to their disgust, and carefully bathed the wounded hand which had broken the glass over Maldio's body. Then, cutting his own handkerchief in strips, he made a bandage to keep out the dirt from the injured knuckles. He knew the soldiers were watching him with scorn; he knew well what Dugdale might expect from them on his recovery to consciousness.

"It seems unnecessary to chain an insensible man," he remarked, as he felt the fluttering heart and faint pulse.

The head of the guard saluted, as he answered in his harsh, gutteral accents:

"The prisoner is amazingly savage, your Excellency. He attacked a whole body of soldiers without fear; our lives would be unsafe if he were not bound. Besides—does the most noble Count forget?—it was the Queen's orders!"

A slight flush crept into Bistoff's cheeks. He bit his lip under his smooth gray mustache.

"You are right," he said. "It was the order of the most Gracious One, to whom all be reverence and honor. I thank you for reminding me. I am distrait to-day, with mourning for my King."

The soldiers raised Dugdale and bore him away.

"Is he true, that Bistoff?" they whispered. "He certainly feigns a deep devotion to the Queen Mother. Will he be the next to fall beneath her frown? Sometimes it almost seems as if he played a double game. Often his voice is strained and false. They say he is passionately in love with the Queen, and that is why he appears melancholy and dejected. She raises him from honor to honor, but it must always be the love of the moth for the star."

A laugh came from the leader.

"Bistoff plays for his own ends—it would never surprise me to see him on the side of the revolutionaries."

They had reached the prison house and flung their human burden, as if he had been so much refuse, into utter darkness, there to await his fate. Outside the sunbeams danced and the flowers grew almost to the door, but the soldiers had selected the black dungeon kept for murderers to house the stranger from England. There the foul rats wandered at will and the walls dripped with damp, while no glimmer of light gave the miserable inmate one ray of comfort from the smiling summer world beyond.

CHAPTER III

THE SMILE OF DEATH

THE Queen Mother was alone in her boudoir. For nearly an hour she had been seated at a heavily carved

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bureau, examining the papers discovered among Dugdale's belongings. Her lips were set and her brow contracted in a frown. She was paler than usual, with the pallor of deadly inward fear. Every now and again she glanced round quickly, as if suspecting some presence behind her. More than once she rose and went to the door, to assure herself the corridor outside was empty. Yet no one passing could see or hear what took place in the Queen's private sanctum, since the walls were strangely thick and the doors had been especially made to obstruct sound. No keyhole permitted the possibility of a peeping eye, heavy bolts securing the frightened inmate from any chance of intrusion.

With a sigh she pushed the papers from her and touched a bell, which was immediately answered by a tall footman wearing the impressive livery of the royal house.

"Tell Count Bistoff I wish to speak to him here alone."

She moved to a seat by the window and gazed vacantly at the drawn blinds. King Maldio's funeral had not yet taken place, and the gloom of death hung heavily over the darkened palace, subduing the brilliant shades of color and shutting out the sun. The Queen's boudoir was papered and carpeted in Pompeian red, with heavy curtains of the same shade, while black oak furniture gave an absolutely unfeminine appearance to the stately apartment. As she lounged wearily on the broad cushioned sofa against a background of rich brocade her massive figure suggested dignity bereft of grace. The thick strands of coarse black hair were drawn back to reveal a broad and troubled brow, while the cruel, passionate mouth betrayed its artificial crimson set in lines of vivid color. She tapped her stout-ringed fingers on the sofa arm, vexed that Bistoff had not immediately answered the royal summons.

He came at last, a little breathless from his hurried journey. The footman had found him near the precincts of the prison house, talking with the soldiers.

"Your Majesty sent for me?" he murmured, closing the door softly and advancing with an air of humility which gratified her pride.

She held out her flabby hand for him to kiss, and her smile of welcome was almost more terrible than her frown.

"Yes. I beg you will talk low, for I have a serious matter on my mind and would seek your counsel. You have seen the papers which the Maschin family sent from their hotel, the papers found in the room occupied by Mortimore Dugdale?"

He bowed assent.

"What did you make of them, Count?"

A slight but courteous shrug of manly shoulders accompanied his reply: "It is not for one of your meanest subjects to offer an opinion, madame, when you yourself are more than able to judge. Let me rather beg for the royal reading of those documents. Did they seem to your Majesty a trifle unfriendly toward Lambasa and its past government?"

"A trifle!" The Queen laughed in that jarring way which so often denoted an outbreak of temper. "You must be fully aware that the country has been entered in no peaceful spirit. Undoubtedly he is a spy, and therefore should never be allowed to leave our shores alive. If he be publicly tried, it is likely to unsettle the populace, for his defense might lead the people to believe King Maldio had been buried alive. Everything, therefore, must be done secretly. Perhaps, for the sake of appearances, you should have made an effort to prove if his words were correct. I suppose it was not possible that life still fluttered in the King's body?"

Her searching eyes were fixed on Bistoff with a strange, uncanny glitter. He met them without wincing, his features so mask-like that no shade of emotion revealed his thoughts.

"Your Majesty forgets perhaps that I looked at the body more than once and announced to the watches it was impossible the King could be alive. No one credits the story that the dead lips moved, and the feeling against Dugdale is very strong. The idea seems generally accepted that the Queen and her ministers will deal privately with the offender. Your subjects are content it should be so."

The portly, black-robed figure gave a quiver of satisfaction, and leaned back on the cushions. Her movement suggested some large dark jelly fallen into a shapeless mass.

"Good," she murmured. "You are a treasure, Bistoff. I was beginning to feel unnerved. You must let me have a sleeping-draught to-night—something to calm my brain and disperse the ugly fancies that keep me restless. I have worked so hard

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for my son, and when I heard that man declaring the King lived—even in his coffin, I thought bitterly to myself that you had failed me."

The Count advanced boldly now, and knelt at Horatia's feet.

With sudden familiarity he fondled her hands and held them to his breast. The Queen swayed nearer, and her lips touched the soft gray hair waving in thick masses upon his brow.

"I have not forgotten my promise," she whispered. "Directly Gisdel is crowned I will see that he raises you to high rank—your reward shall be great, faithful and devoted servant! You have played your part well. Who but the trusted medical attendant of King Maldio could have removed him so successfully from the throne? I shall ever regard you as the savior of our fortunes, as Lambasa's truest friend. I can rule Gisdel, but Maldio was impossible—he deserved his fate, he brought it upon himself!"

The paid assassin let go the royal hands, and rose quickly to his feet. The recent touch of the Queen's lips on his forehead seemed to his tortured soul as some raw and aching wound—a scar that must brand him forever and sully his manhood. She pointed to a large square box, surmounted by a gold crown, and the initial M.

"I want you to take that away," she said, "and destroy the contents. It is packed with love-letters from the young English girl whom our mad Maldio threatened to marry. It nauseates me to read the rubbish."

Bistoff looked down on the pathetic souvenir of a boy-king's romance, and his heart was sore.

"They shall be removed as your Majesty directs," he said. Then pausing, his mind traveled back to the prisoner in the dark cell, not far from the long shaded window by which the Queen sat. "May I ask if Dugdale's punishment has yet been decided upon? Your Majesty, I know, is always prompt."

The Queen smiled in a peculiarly evil way—it had been named by Lambasa "The Smile of Death." Then she replied in her deep masculine voice:

"I am ready to take advice upon the subject, if you have any to give, but I hold that for such an offender a good death would be unsuitable. I want him to suffer, understand! We must be revenged upon this impertinent fellow."

"My Queen is always right," answered Bistoff, "and if revenge is pleasant to her, she shall not be denied the satisfaction her royal soul desires. I have a suggestion to make which should fully meet all requirements, but first I would humbly seek her views, that together we may compare them with my own."

Queen Horatia bent forward, and rested her square chin upon her hands.

"I had thought," she muttered, "that his cell might be filled with starving vermin. They would soon devour him, since he is bound. I fancy I see them already gnawing the bones of one who crept into our country, even as a rat may creep into the palace of a king, to spy upon us and work our downfall."

Bistoff came close to her side and whispered in low impressive tones.

"That death would be too unclean for any hand which had touched the King. If it came to be rumored abroad by the soldiers, the people who loved Maldio might ponder on this and rebel. I have thought out a death of equal terror, which would forcibly illustrate that great and awful word—Retribution. Let Mortimore Dugdale be taken alive at night to the royal vault! Let him be secretly imprisoned there—alone with the body he would have violated! Once in the vault, the tomb of Maldio and the stranger will be closed forever. No cry could pierce those massive walls, and the Englishman, alive in the royal tomb, must die of slow starvation and torturing thirst! Once again he will confront the white features of the corpse beneath the glass of the coffin-lid—this time alone!"

The Queen raised her hands and, thrilling with excitement, turned to Bistoff:

"Retribution indeed!" she said. "A fitting punishment. My consent is given. The dead Maldio and his would-be deliverer shall face eternity together!"

CHAPTER IV

COUNT BISTOFF'S SECRET

KING MALDIO'S state funeral proved deeply impressive. It was no mere pageant of pomp and show in the eyes of his subjects, but a spectacle which filled the heart with such real sorrow that

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the human side touched them more forcibly than any ceremonial and outward magnificence.

Maldio's vault was situated in the most beautiful spot of the cathedral, shaded by ancient windows of stained glass and surrounded by fine specimens of architecture. To the right, ten virgin martyrs carved in stone kept silent watch beneath a dome inlaid with priceless mosaic work.

As the King's coffin was lowered from sight, the only dry eyes were those of Queen Horatia and her son Gisdel, who watched without a trace of emotion the laying to rest of the late King.

"We suffered more than all the weeping congregation," Queen Horatia told her ladies-in-waiting, when they returned to the palace, "but we remembered that sovereigns must ever ply their part of dignified endurance and set an example of fortitude."

After the sad ceremony Count Bistoff begged to be excused from his recent attendance day and night at the palace. The King's death had been a great strain, he told the Queen. He wished to retire to his quiet domain, there to rest a while, and try to forget the painful incidents of the recent past.

The Count's residence had once been an old monastery. The quaint, rambling house and large grounds were singularly romantic, situated but a few miles from the town and shut off from the main road by dense regiments of pine trees.

While Bistoff wandered in the cool shade of his garden he knew what was taking place in the distant prison house adjoining the royal palace. That evening the miserable man who had lain bound in a filthy cell was to be brought suddenly out to hear his fate. He would be told of the hideous sentence—would know that he must be imprisoned alive in the tomb of Maldio the Thinker, where no cry could pierce the massive walls, no prayer deliver him from the torture of a slow, lingering death.

As the Count thought on the gruesome facts, great drops broke out upon his forehead and even his lips turned white. From head to foot he shuddered violently and the strength of his limbs failed him. With a deep sigh he sank upon a low garden seat and rested his forehead in his hands.

It was thus Heldra, his wife, found him, long after the summons to the evening meal had echoed through the lofty hall and winding corridors of Villa Monastero.

"Ah," she cried, running forward with outstretched hands, "so there is my very own Diarmid. I thought he had vanished into thin air, and while I have been searching for the lost one, our food has been spoiling shamefully."

She tried to pull him up, but he shook his head and drew her down to the seat—a slight figure in close-fitting black, wonderfully young for a woman of five and thirty.

"Don't ask me to eat, Heldra," he said. "The very thought of food revolts me in my present mood. Stay here and listen to my story. I have something to say of grave importance, but first you must swear by the living God never to betray the secret I am bound to reveal to you this evening."

Seldom had she heard her husband's voice so shaken with emotion. She knew that he was broken-hearted at the loss of the young King, but the awful anxiety she read in his eyes came as a revelation.

"Dear Diarmid," she murmured, "are you not somewhat overwrought—wearied out by the long strain of court service? Surely it would be better to eat and rest? What can you have to tell me that will not keep until you are feeling stronger?"

Just for a moment she feared for her husband's reason, as he stared down fixedly at her upturned face, discerning the inward truth and sincerity of her nature. He knew he could trust this woman. However grave the secret, she would not fear; for beneath her frail exterior the iron nerve and stanch spirit triumphed gloriously.

"Heldra," he whispered, "you must not think that I am mad, though I tell you facts which will seem like the ravings of a lunatic or the substance of a nightmare. At least you know something of the character of Queen Horatia, and that may help you to realize the awful position in which I have been placed."

The Countess laid her cool hand in Diarmid's burning palm. She understood instinctively now that his brain was as strong as ever. His evident distress arose from some terrible knowledge of which she was ignorant.

"Perhaps you guess," he whispered, "how for years I have chafed against the barbarity of our country—how I sought to frustrate the wicked machinations of that atrocious woman—Queen Horatia."

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Countess Bistoff bowed her head in sympathetic assent.

"Yes, I know your sufferings well. The crimes of the Queen have aged you with a weight of bitter sorrow. I owe my darling's gray hairs to the vile conspiracies he has witnessed in a court of corruption!"

Her voice shook with a tremor of inward indignation.

"King Maldio," continued the Count, "came as a bright star on the dark night of treachery. He could have raised Lambasa from the dust—he longed to complete the reforms he was so eagerly planning. But the Queen Mother hated her stepson with a fierce and deadly loathing, and I who watched her as a cat might watch a mouse, gradually discerned that her one aim in existence was to remove Maldio from her path, so that the poor, weak, irresponsible Gisdel might reign in his stead. I suspected her of plotting against the life of her kingly stepson, and in order to save the boy I made myself into a schemer of equal skill. I played my part of hypocrite so well that Queen Horatia to this moment believes I am her ardent admirer, as well as her most humble and cringing servant. Often I have seen your sweet face rising like a vision of an angel between myself and that bloodthirsty woman at whose feet I knelt, offering the homage of a heart that sickened and fainted in her unholy presence. Gradually, by slow and well-conceived devices, I made her believe that I too was a monster of iniquity, and thus I drew from her the knowledge that great reward would fall to the hand that swept her stepchild from the throne. I offered—think of it, Heldra, I who loved Maldio as I loved my own life!—to play the part of hired assassin—to poison the young King whose health had been entrusted to my care! The Queen promised me a high position and large fortune if I succeeded.'

A little cry of horror rose to Heldra's lips, the low smothered cry of a wounded soul. Her lips parted and her eyes were filled with dumb pleading, as if entreating her husband to take back his words—to assure her, upon oath, he had not lent himself to dishonor.

Only a moment he kept her in suspense. Then in thrilling accents the words broke from him with a glad, victorious ring:

"King Maldio, mourned by his people, interred to-day, is *not* dead!"

CHAPTER V

BEFORE THE MORROW

HELDRA started violently. King Maldio not dead! Her husband must be raving. Had not the royal funeral taken place that very day? Was not Maldio already lying entombed in a cathedral vault?

He read his wife's thoughts, and continued his narrative quickly.

"You may well look incredulous and fear for my sanity," he continued, still keeping a firm hold upon her now trembling hand. "But to save the King I schemed, plotted, and studied night and day, helped by the Almighty, whose strong arm alone can overthrow the evil-doer. Perhaps you remember, not long since, how I worked day and night in my laboratory until at last I fell asleep over my labors, after remaining out of bed for forty-eight hours. You were anxious to know the nature of those continuous experiments, but with your usual goodness you ceased from questioning when you saw it gave me pain. You little dreamed I was working out the salvation of our country—that I was fighting, in my own quiet way, for the young King's life. You will still, God willing, see the beloved 'Thinker' once again reigning over Lambasa and our hearts!"

"But how could that be?" cried Heldra, unconvinced. "Can you raise the lifeless body from the tomb,—can you do that, Diarmid? Even you, the most brilliant scientist in all our land?"

She twined her arms round her husband as if to protect him, dreading he might be in the throes of some terrible delusion.

"Be calm," he whispered. "You must brace your nerves—you must stand by me and play your allotted part in this fight for justice. During those long days of quiet experiment I discovered a marvelous drug, as yet unknown to the medical profession, which can throw the human body into a deathlike trance. I tried the experiment on animals, and assured myself that suspended animation could be quickly recalled to full pulsing life by administering a strong antidote given after the lapse of a certain period. The apparently dead form not only revives but on taking up its burden of life appears refreshed and invigorated by the trance-stage through which it has passed.

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"I must, before daybreak, rescue Maldio secretly from the tomb and make known to him the plot against his life and the step I was obliged to take before I could be certain of Horatia's guilt. Early to-morrow morning the King will be here at Villa Monastero, seeking your protection. I propose, in due time, to smuggle him away in disguise, and let him remain in exile until the right moment arrives for the injured monarch to claim his throne. The revolution is coming, Heldra, as sure as you and I are seated here in this peaceful garden. Together we must guard well the secret which will eventually ruin the court of King Gisdel. The people will be mad with joy when I take them to the empty tomb—when they realize that the living Maldio is ready to rule over them once more."

Count Bistoff spoke with such calm assurance that Heldra could no longer doubt the sincerity of his words. Quickly she grasped the amazing situation which chilled and appalled her woman's soul. Just for a moment the thought that the King lived had filled her with such speechless joy that her brain reeled with the sudden shock of gladness. Then, in a flash, her pride in her husband sank before the awful dangers she knew he must risk before the distant day of triumph.

"How can you possibly smuggle the King out of his tomb?" she gasped. "Even though you are able to revive him, I cannot imagine by what means you will obtain access to the body. Should Queen Horatia suspect, your life would not be worth a moment's purchase. You know her scheme of vengeance; nothing would be bad enough for the hand that betrayed her in friendship's name."

Heldra cowered down, hiding her face on her husband's breast. From head to foot she trembled violently. Her great love for him made her weak and despairing. She could almost have wished he would leave the sleeper in the tomb, but then his soul would be stained by murder—he would be forever accursed.

"Courage, courage, little woman," he murmured softly. "Do I see tears in your eyes? Surely you should rejoice that I have been given this great mission, that I am able to save the King from the vile treachery surrounding his young life. You may well wonder how I shall get to the tomb, but Providence has mercifully prepared a way. Long before Maldio was born, before I even had grown to manhood, that way was discovered and revealed to me by one long since departed. You never knew my father, but his fame as a celebrated architect lives after him. He dwelt and died in this dear old home, enthralled by its ancient beauty and restful charm. He left me a legacy for to-night—he is directing me now. I fancy I hear his voice and catch the once familiar step. I firmly believe his spirit must know what is taking place in the home he loved."

Heldra grew impatient.

"Dearest," she whispered, "don't stray from the subject. Tell me all—quickly, for suspense is torture!"

"When I was a mere boy," he continued breathlessly, "my father restored a part of the cathedral and while working there discovered the entrance to a secret passage which had escaped the notice of those who carried out his plans for improvement. The night before the discovery he had been sorely troubled by a vivid and perpetually returning nightmare. He dreamed of a revolution, though at that time the country was suffering from no signs of unrest. He saw massacre on every side—Lambasa drenched with the blood of women and children. Each time the vision occurred he succeeded in saving himself and family by hiding in an underground passage leading from a vault where a future king should lie. He remembered the awful dream the moment he found the secret door, and realized that it led from the tomb reserved for our then King's son.

"He waited his opportunity and privately investigated the mysterious passage. To his amazement he found it communicated directly with the monastery gardens. It was possible to walk from the tomb to our dry well, the one near the rockery, and it is through that well that I and my treasure will emerge to-night. My father told me alone of this secret tunnel, for he said: 'You will always live here, Diarmid, and some day it may prove useful if my dream should be a warning of future ill.' His words were certainly prophetic and before accepting Queen Horatia's murderous suggestions, I took care to make thorough investigations. I assure you I am master of the situation, I need have no fear."

Heldra looked up into his eyes with a deep and overwhelming admiration:

"O husband," she whispered, "how good and great you are! You risk your life will-

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ingly for our boy King and with the spirit of a true soldier. Yet if harm befall you, how can I endure the long years to follow, the dark days in store? But I am selfish. Give me your courage, make me worthy to be King Maldio's subject!"

Count Bistoff rose and drew her to her feet. He held her fast, and it seemed as if he instilled by his touch some of his own heroism into the slim woman with the pale, terrified face.

"Tell me exactly what I am to do," she said. "Every detail shall be carried out unfailingly."

"Inform the servants I have been called to attend a gentleman who is insane and that I may be obliged to bring him and his keeper here. Let them prepare two rooms tonight; this done, order the household to bed. On my return I shall give out that the patient is dangerous and that no one must approach him save myself. By this ruse we can keep the King secluded and give him time to consider his future plans."

Heldra bowed her head assentingly.

"You spoke of a keeper," she said. "Have you an accomplice, and are you quite sure you can trust him?"

"The keeper," replied the Count, his voice vibrating as he drew in his breath with smothered indignation, "will be the unfortunate Englishman who discovered my secret too soon, the man who swore that Maldio still lived. By Queen Horatia's orders he is imprisoned alive in Maldio's tomb—left there to die. I suggested that death in order that I might save him."

He looked at his watch as he spoke. The daylight had vanished, and a night bird burst into full-throated melody. Countess Bistoff passed her hand over her bewildered brow.

Before the morrow, she told herself, if her husband's plan succeeded, the much-talked-of prisoner, Mortimore Dugdale, and the supposed dead King would be safely sheltered in the quiet retreat of those gray walls. Villa Monastero would hold in its safe keeping the living salvage of a royal tomb.

CHAPTER VI

IN THE ROYAL VAULT

THE horrible deed was done. The living man had been duly conducted, under cover of the night, to the cathedral and lowered, fully conscious of his fate, into the stately tomb of Maldio the King. This inhuman outrage was known only to a select circle of high officials, who executed the ghastly orders without comment, soulless and utterly indifferent to the sufferings of the offender.

When Mortimore Dugdale found himself alone with the corpse and dimly realized he could not escape the awful torture of starvation, his tottering reason turned to the one refuge—self-destruction. With bloodshot eyes he gazed at the dead King, wondering if once again he would see that faint movement which had been the cause of his own downfall.

"If I could bring you back now—as I might have done then," he cried, "it would only be to endure my torment. You are safe in the hands of God, but I am the victim of man's malice, and this accursed country will have to answer for my blood!"

He spoke without knowing what he said, for the dark, unhealthy prison cell in the palace grounds had weakened brain as well as body. The food offered him had been uneatable, and save for an occasional mug of water he had fasted since his faint in the gardens. He was weak and tottered as he stood, supporting himself upon the raised coffin with its gold trappings and glass lid.

He was calculating whether he had sufficient strength to drag his body, sore and aching from the heavy chains but recently removed, to the not far distant wall, against which he intended, if possible, to dash out his brains and thus end his misery.

He fancied the faces of dead friends beckoned to him through the gloom. He heard voices of those he loved whispering messages in his ears. Vaguely he wondered whether the tomb were but a dream of delirium. Perhaps he was safe at home, guarded by tender nurses who watched by his sick-bed. It was all so unreal and shadowy. Surely he would wake and find himself in England, surrounded by his old trusted servants in his own house.

He staggered to the wall and with one last supreme effort hurled himself head foremost upon the surface of solid stone. The self-inflicted blow brought the desired oblivion and he fell heavily to the ground with a great bleeding gash across his forehead.

Thus he lay, a wasted, deathlike form, hearing no sound as the fearless Count Bistoff, lantern in hand, approached the secret entrance from his long pilgrimage underground to the cathedral. Heldra had

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boldly offered to accompany him, but he pointed out how her absence might rouse the suspicions of the servants. He knew well it was no fitting task for a woman, and, still more, as he lowered himself into the fern-lined well with Heldra gazing down, her figure bathed in moonlight, he owned to himself there was a possibility of finding life extinct in Maldio. If anything had gone wrong he, Diarmid, would stand in the position of a veritable murderer. The idea filled his soul with an almost intolerable weight of anxiety.

"Heaven watch over you, dearest!" she whispered as he sank from view. "I shall be here. When the household retires I will creep back and listen for the sound of your voice."

He called back a soft *au revoir*, and tried to make the word as light-hearted as possible. Besides his lantern, he carried a bag with the required antidote and other restoratives; also food and stimulant for both Maldio and the Englishman.

More than once as he hurried along he felt himself pursued by an image of the Queen. Her cruel face materialized in fancy to haunt him, and from head to foot he shuddered to think she could rest in bed, believing that Mortimore Dugdale was buried alive and might linger for days to endure indescribable torture. From a swift walk the Count on his errand of deliverance broke into a run, and it was a very hot and panting messenger of mercy who eventually burst into the silent chamber of the tomb.

But words died on his lips as his lantern revealed the Englishman's body huddled up, limp and senseless, against the blood-stained wall.

In a moment the medical eyes realized what had occurred. The ugly gash across the head told its own story. He had instinctively relied upon Dugdale's assistance. Now he realized that if Maldio were restored, he, instead, must lend a hand in carrying the unfortunate stranger back to Villa Monastero.

Bistoff paused only a moment by the figure on the ground; his thoughts were centered upon that still form beneath the coffin-lid. Tears sprang to his eyes as he approached his King, and with trembling hands let in the air by quickly removing the covering of glass. With tender arms he raised the apparently dead boy and eagerly ministered to the body he lifted to the ground. For a while it seemed as if the attempted task were hopeless; then gradually his skilful efforts brought signs of reviving life. A very faint color stole into the blue-gray lips, and the slight movement Dugdale had described during the lying-in-state was clearly visible. Count Bistoff could have cried for joy. Slowly the *tap-tap* of the heart could be felt, with extreme weakness and indecision against the doctor's warm hand. Then, while he timed each beat, the movement strengthened and became regular, while fluttering pulses once more spoke their message of life. A long and hardly attained breath suddenly shook the body, then the limbs and arms stretched like an animal waking from slumber.

As Maldio opened his eyes he looked unknowingly at the kind, strained face bending over him.

An awful thought rushed through the doctor's brain and stabbed him like a sharp knife. What if the body revived without the brain? What if he had destroyed the intellect and brought back only the human shell of a beloved being?

Even as this awful supposition filled him with inward horror, the glazed eyes, fringed by long sweeping lashes, brightened perceptibly, the old intelligent look came back, and Maldio said feebly:

"You appear somewhat glum this morning, Count. Is anything the matter?"

The sound of the voice asking its simple question was strangely uncanny, yet it filled Bistoff with unspeakable joy. He knew that in another moment, with returning consciousness, the unusual surroundings must attract notice. He had carried Maldio as far away as possible from the coffin and was supporting him with his back to that gruesome relic of recent burial.

"I beg your Majesty to drink this quickly," said the low, persuasive voice, placing a flask to the King's lips, "and please eat a morsel of food."

The boy swallowed the liquid obediently, but smiled at the sight of the delicately cut sandwiches proffered by Bistoff.

"I am not hungry, thank you, but I want you to tell me what has happened. Where are we? Have I been ill? This looks like a prison—I can't understand——"

He tried to turn his head, but the quick hands supporting him prevented the movement.

"Keep still, and all will be well, your

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Majesty. You are safe with me, and I am able to guard you from harm. You have passed through dangers, but the Lord has seen fit to save you from your enemies. We are not imprisoned here. In a short time we shall be out in the blessed air. May I beg you to say exactly how you feel?"

Maldio blinked his eyes; he was strangely bewildered.

"I feel," he declared, "as if I had enjoyed an extraordinary rest. Surely I have been asleep a very long time! If you were a younger man, Count, and we were not apparently in a stone cell, I think I would challenge you to a boxing match! The blood seems rushing through my veins like quicksilver. I never felt more strangely alive!"

The doctor remembered how the animals had leaped and jumped on recovering from their experimental trance, and with what appetite they devoured food about an hour after returning to consciousness, though, like Maldio, they at first refused nourishment.

As the doctor opened his lips to speak, realizing the moment had come to reveal the whole truth, the young King suddenly discovered he was dressed in full uniform, with all his orders blazing on his tunic. He started up unexpectedly, slipping like an eel from the detaining hands and, whirling round, faced, with startled eyes and parted lips, the coffin, and the blood-stained Mortimore Dugdale, who lay, white as death, upon the floor of the dimly lighted vault.

CHAPTER VII

HORATIA'S VICTIMS

COUNT BISTOFF had always been known as one of the most tactful men at the court of Lambasa. He was a born diplomat and his gentle manner made him beloved of all. But never had his strong and considerate nature faced such a difficult situation. Very carefully he chose his words as in a voice vibrating with emotion he told the young King, as briefly as possible, the story of Queen Horatia's treachery. As he described how he had saved Maldio from assassination and checkmated her evil designs, it was clear that his story was making a deep—an almost overwhelming impression on the resurrected monarch.

As a child Maldio had ever been a lover of romance and thirsted for adventure. The strict etiquette of the court régime often made him envy the free lives of those who were unhampered by cares of state. The palace had never been a home to him. Instinctively he felt his stepmother's smoldering hatred. Even when he tried to win the love of Prince Gisdel, whose mental weakness he sorely pitied, Horatia would be the first to set her son against his kingly brother. She constantly told him never to trust Maldio, and always to avoid his companionship when possible, while her opposition to all reform made the King's efforts increasingly difficult.

Now the scales fell from Maldio's eyes as he listened to the Count's story. He felt as if he had truly died, to wake in a new world to a life of fuller understanding. Touchingly Bistoff related the real sorrow portrayed by a heart-broken populace. He also described the scene created by Dugdale during the lying-in-state, and Horatia's subsequent orders for the removal of the supposed criminal to the King's tomb.

"Whatever course your Majesty may take in the future," said Bistoff respectfully, "let me pray you will think of nothing at present but our immediate return to Villa Monastero. There, after rest and refreshment, the situation and its critical issues can be duly considered."

"I always knew that you were true to me," Maldio said, "and my instinct did not play me false. I used to think the day might come when I should have trouble with my stepmother, and though you were apparently her friend, I felt convinced that if I required your counsel it would be wise, just and always at my disposal. Strangely enough, many of the facts just disclosed have come to me with a familiarity which seems to prove some portion of my brain grasped the incidents which followed my apparent death. Not many men can stand and gaze upon their own coffin, yet it gives me no fear—I rested so well in that strange bed. But see, my thoughts are wandering from the business of the hour. Later I shall hope to express my gratitude in fitting words, at present I am dazed. Let us do what we can for this poor fellow who has endured such merciless torments on my account. My heart bleeds for him."

He bent down and helped to raise Mortimore Dugdale from the ground. Together they bound up his wound with some fine

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linen from the royal coffin, trying to bring him back to consciousness with restoratives from the doctor's bag.

"At present it is useless to expect him to revive," declared the medical man. "When he does come round, I fear he will only wake to the delirium of brain-fever. If your Majesty has the strength, perhaps you would help me carry our burden back to the Villa. The walk is long, but the poor fellow is wasted to a skeleton, so we shall not find him very heavy. I will sling the lantern round my neck, so as to leave both hands free."

Maldio assured the Count he was able for any exertion. His will, as well as his muscles, felt as strong as iron.

Gently they bore the senseless form of the tortured Englishman through the long, narrow tunnel wending its secret way beneath the now silent thoroughfares of the capital. Often they paused to change positions, when Bistoff noticed his royal companion was suffering from fatigue. During their monotonous journey Bistoff supplied fresh funds of information. He told how Heldra would be awaiting them, eager to render humble and devoted service to the highest in their land, she alone knowing the true facts of the case.

Maldio asked excitedly whether Bistoff had collected all the recent papers with the accounts of his own decease.

"I dare say my stepmother was careful to give me a truly magnificent funeral," he said, with a boyish smile. "It is only fair, if you murder your king, to treat the people to a fine spectacle and make a big parade of the last obsequies! This poor Dugdale was my true friend, though he made a shocking mistake. Doubtless he gave you a bad moment, Count, when you thought your treasured plans were to be spoiled in so unexpected a manner."

The scene flashed vividly back as Bistoff replied:

"I trembled so that I feared the guards would discover my alarm and suspect me of some hidden crime. Queen Horatia, I fancy, saw in imagination her vile plans already destroyed and cursed me for a bungler! Now she can never expect to be confronted by her victim in this world. To-night she sleeps in peace, satisfied that the throne is safely procured for Prince Gisdel, who I believe dreads at heart the thought of kingship. But he dare not breathe his fears. He is too cowed by his mother even to confess in her hearing that he could wish Maldio the Thinker alive again!"

They walked on in silence, their burden seeming to grow heavier every minute.

"That was a grand name—'The Thinker.' I was unworthy of so high a title," declared Maldio humbly. "To be a king in the dominion of Thought, one must indeed undergo a long, hard training."

Presently they paused and, raising the lantern, Bistoff revealed the narrow exit, a mere hole in a dark, damp wall.

"We must creep through singly, and get poor Dugdale up as best we can," he whispered. "Please go first, your Majesty; you will find a narrow flight of stairs outside, buried in ferns. I will follow, for the way is more familiar to me, and I think I can drag Dugdale along without adding to his injuries."

Maldio obeyed. He was thankful to look up and see the stars overhead and the moonbeams playing among the fern leaves in the well.

"We return to the world," he murmured, and his voice thrilled with gladness. "I do not need the lantern; the good God has given us His light."

A soft voice came from the garden above: "Is it you, Diarmid? Have you saved the King?"

A world of anxiety trembled in the question, breathed in low, eager tones.

A boyish head emerged from the greenery. The scarlet of a uniform caught the shimmering light of the moon, and an outstretched hand seized Heldra's fingers as she bent down to guide the climber's steps.

"Your husband is following. He will be with you in a moment, Countess."

She knelt humbly, and kissed his sleeve.

"Long live the King!" she murmured in a thrilling tone of ecstasy.

He raised her, and his smile was strangely wistful and boyish as he gazed into her tear-dimmed eyes. Their deep emotion appealed to his responsive nature.

"King Maldio is dead for the time being," he answered. "I come as your guest, relying only upon my manhood. Will you help a mere man to minister to his fellow sufferer in distress?"

He turned, and simultaneously Bistoff appeared, bearing across his shoulder the blood-stained body of Queen Horatia's second victim.

In a moment kingship and ceremonial

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were forgotten, as three very human souls bent in tender solicitude over the bruised and broken Englishman. For the first time Dugdale moved feebly and uttered, with a faint moan, one word of terrible longing and desire—"Water!"

That gasp of agony went straight to the King's heart. He thought of Queen Horatia feasting and drinking at the palace, while she left her foe to face a death of starvation and thirst. He heard the splash of a fountain near by, and before the Count had time to rise, flew to obey that pitiful demand.

"The King's feet are swift in the service of suffering," whispered Heldra.

CHAPTER VIII

THE GOLDEN MOMENT OF OPPORTUNITY

COUNT BISTOFF'S prophecy came true, and when Mortimore Dugdale recovered consciousness he was found to be suffering from severe concussion. He remembered nothing, and the fears haunting his fevered brain in no way related to the recent horrors he had experienced. The doctor saw it would be easy enough to pass this sick man off as the expected mental patient if the young King objected to that rôle.

When Dugdale was comfortably in bed, with the Countess installed as nurse, Maldio and his host sat over their wine in an adjoining chamber discussing future plans. The King had eaten heartily of the lavish repast, which Heldra served with her own hands, reveling in the welcome task. As Maldio talked, Count Bistoff looked for signs of returning fatigue, and marveled to see him so bright, strong and clear-headed.

"I could imagine myself immortal," he said, "dropped straight from the spheres, relieved from the burden of the flesh. I sincerely hope that for a while at least King Maldio, with his many cares, may rest in the silent tomb. Do not urge me to reveal myself at present. Allow me a brief respite. Let me enjoy this gift of manhood, unknown as sovereign, in a world which is good to commoners but cruel to kings."

Count Bistoff started.

The boy clasped his hands and tossed his young head like a horse chafing against the bridle.

"I mean, my dear Bistoff, that since you have saved me, I claim at your hands a brief boon of freedom. What can a few months matter out of a life—a year even—if afterward the heavy burdens of kingship are taken up once more? I want you to give me, for at least a short time, this great, wonderful world, with its undiscovered joys—as God has given it to other men! Let Gisdel reign for a while and learn the sorrows of the throne. I do not grudge the Queen her temporary triumph. The day of vengeance will only be postponed. If"—he drew in his breath and his eyes closed—"if I could but escape to England in disguise—if I could see again the face I love——"

He broke off shortly, and the whole mystery of Maldio's wish became clear with those burning words from his eager, trembling lips. He was not fretting for his lost throne or chafing against Horatia's hideous treachery; his mind held only the image of a beautiful girl in a distant country.

Count Bistoff had married for love and could not prevent a swift look of sympathy.

"It is difficult," he said, "to refuse your Majesty anything on such a night as this. But to love is not always wise, and for a ruler the tender passion is a pitfall of destruction."

Maldio laughed, laughed with a wondrous note of youth. "Yes—for a ruler, but I shall not rule. It is Gisdel's task. Let *him* escape this passion of the senses, this enchanting slavery, until he gives me back my crown. I crave for just one look, one word from the dear lips and eyes of the woman I worship. If I return now to my high office, the country will hardly have missed me. Let them see me replaced, let them bend the knee to Gisdel, while I grasp my one swift chance of freedom. You were young yourself, dear friend; think of those happy days and then say if you can find it in your heart to refuse me the help I crave, the gift I ask. Nay, this is more than a request, it is a command!"

But he no longer saw the gray-haired physician upon whose face the near past had added many fresh lines of care. He looked beyond the old monastic room with its quaint beamed ceiling, and instead the vision rose before his eyes of a little English house on the far side of a picturesque river flowing by the stately grounds of an old college. In fancy he saw a slight girlish figure silhouetted in the window, and fancied it beckoned wildly, as if in distress. Across the vast space dividing the university town

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from off Lambasa a phantom voice called despairingly: "I am in trouble—come and help me!"

Bistoff, realizing that Maldio had set his mind on temporary freedom, watched the beauteous face light up with love's soft radiance. Denial or persuasion would be useless; the King had spoken—why should his subject rebel? After all, much as Maldio was loved, would he not be doubly dear to his people after a period of Gisdel's rule? The Queen must duly discover that a revolutionary spirit stalked the land, a grim menace to her son's throne. She would suffer soon enough at the hands of the people who had grown sick and tired of her evil deeds. When the troops were ready to rise against Horatia and the new King's ministers, then Maldio's hour would be at hand. With Gisdel's fall, the beloved Thinker should rise victorious from his tomb.

"Your Majesty knows," murmured Bistoff, "that I have always obeyed my King's commands. If you tell me to remain silent, I am dumb. If you ask my help, I humbly proffer you the service of a devoted subject."

Maldio sprang to his feet and placed two grateful hands on the Count's shoulders.

"I felt," he said, "that I could rely upon your generous heart and understanding nature. I come to you as I entered the tomb,—penniless, save for the jewels they would have buried with me. These I shall leave in your safe-keeping. In the meanwhile, can you supply me with funds for my ——" he hesitated before finding the right word; then added with a radiant smile, "my holiday from kingship?"

Bistoff felt the blood stir in his own veins at the glad sound which vibrated through Maldio's voice.

"I have money enough of my own already to serve your Majesty's purpose, but I propose handing you the princely sum promised me by Queen Horatia as a reward for murder. It is meet this blood-money should be spent right royally by the victim of her treachery."

The idea pleased Maldio.

"Good," he said. "Whatever she gives you, I will treble the amount on my return to power." Then, the boyish note ringing out again: "But you must no longer call me your Majesty," cried the boyish voice. "Let us think of a new name, since the King is still dead. I must be known as a happy commoner—traveling for distraction. Just to remind me I was once a king—I will call myself Kingsley,—Marmaduke Kingsley. That has no flavor of Lambasa—it sounds quite English!"

As he spoke Heldra came softly to the door.

"How is the sufferer?" asked Maldio anxiously.

"He sleeps, your Majesty, and looks less troubled. I came to ask if I could be of any service."

"Perhaps, Countess, you can suggest a disguise which would deceive the Queen Mother herself if she came face to face with the "murdered" Maldio—one that will carry me safely over the sea, to the woman I love!"

For a moment Heldra stared, aghast; then her eyes brightened, and she moved nearer with a quick, excited step. Her resourceful brain responded to the appeal; her quick, unfailing intellect felt instinctively the boy King's cry for freedom and romance.

"Disguised as a Sister of Mercy," she said, "our merciful King shall pass unchallenged where he will, provided with passports from Diarmid Bistoff, the trusted physician of Queen Horatia and her royal son."

TO BE CONTINUED

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A COLLISION IN ELYSIUM

by

John A Heffernan

QUITE unnecessary to remind me that the poet, when he thinks of "the time, the place, and the girl," has a vision of summer moonlight sifting through leafy lacework, and that any properly constituted poet would shriek in horror at the conjunction of beauty, a trolley-car and 10 A.M. I know it. But that heedless young divinity who seems to be the only survivor of the Olympian population makes his combinations without the slightest regard for poets. If it suits his whim to assemble the essential elements in a trolley-car at the hour of ten in the morning, why, the conductor pulls the bell-cord, the car stops, then starts again with a jerk, and Priscilla is precipitated into the suddenly outstretched arms of Patrick Sarsfield Mullally. And there you are!

Rather, there they were. Patrick hadn't been a crack baseball player for nothing——he had a good eye; so when he saw hurtling toward him from the door of the too suddenly started car a bewildering combination of white plumes and enormous hat, dewy blue eyes and rose-leaf cheeks, gray gown and frantically outstretched arms, he just reached out and got it. Immediate consequences were numerous and very immediate. The point of a pretty parasol ripped along his knee making a rent in his trousers and slightly abrading the skin; a chatelaine bag swung around his neck and boxed him smartly on the ear, knocking his hat out the open window; feathers filled his eyes; a hat-pin made a neat little puncture in his cheek, and Priscilla's skull, notwithstanding its covering of hat and coiffure, butted him on the nose with full force and effect as the lawyers say.

"Excuse me!" said Patrick into Priscilla's plumes.

"Goodness, gracious!" gasped Priscilla into Patrick's expansive bosom.

Then Priscilla righted herself and the occultation of Patrick ended. The disclosed countenance was somewhat disfigured as Priscilla's startled eyes looked upon it. A tiny red bead rested on the cheek where the hat-pin had made its mark. Patrick hastily clapped his handkerchief to his nose to check a hemorrhage, which for a while thereafter was responsible for the young man's agglutinative articulation.

Priscilla herself was not yet quite shipshape. Her hat had assumed an angle

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distinctly disreputable. She straightened it with a deft right hand. Her bag still hung from her wrist, and Patrick, holding his nose with one hand, reached with the other for her parasol, which had fallen on the floor. As he did so he saw the rent in the knee of his trousers. In such moments coördination is disturbed. There were in Patrick's brain a graceful proffer of the parasol to its flustered owner, a premeditated pleasant smile and a polite "Allow me!" Hand and features obeyed orders but the wires to the tongue got crossed. Patrick proffered the parasol gracefully enough, smiled with reasonable success under his ensanguined handkerchief, but what he said was "Oh, hell!"

Priscilla's big blue eyes which had been soft with sorrow hardened with indignation. Patrick became overwhelmingly conscious of his bare, bruised knee and to cover it flung the other leg over it. Unfortunately he could not fling the other leg without also flinging the other foot, and the other foot fatuously kicked Priscilla in the knee. Blue eyes were wet with tears of anger and pain as Priscilla marched to the other end of the car, leaving Patrick not only damaged but demoralized.

Mullally was a fine, healthy young American. His father was "Bill" Mullally, Tammany leader of the One Hundred and Seventh Assembly District, on the upper East Side, former boss of the Board of Aldermen, and now mainstay and most valued counselor of the big chief of Tammany. We shall meet him presently. Patrick was heir to all his father had garnered, the expression of his father's desire along moral and educational lines, the fulfilment of all the things his father had secretly hoped. When he passed his bar examination his father said to him: "Pat, get busy now and make some money. I've given you an education, but you must earn your own automobile." At the end of two years of hard work he was still riding in trolley-cars, but he could see the automobile ahead. He was twenty-six, rather broad than tall, dark skinned, brown eyed, and good to look upon. Such was the young man who sat in the trolley-car, holding his bleeding nose and trying to collect his scattered wits.

"Well, of all the chumps!" said he wrathfully to himself. "Poor child, as if she wasn't upset enough!" He glared at his offending foot. "Clumsy brute! How in Heaven's name can a fellow square it! I'm a fine sight with a bleeding nose to stand before a young lady and ask her pardon! And then the hole in my knee! Yet I can't let her think I'm just an irredeemable ruffian. Gee, but she's pretty! I wonder if this nose will ever"—an experimental snuffle —"Why it has stopped. I'll just go and tell her I'm sorry and ask— Oh, Lord!"

This last was a groan due to the sudden appearance in the doorway of a young man of robust figure, with a Jovian brow and broad features across which played an expression at once cordial and melancholy. Patrick recognized the Honorable Edmund Philpot Cullen.

"Well Sarsfield, me bhoy," rolled out a rich, sonorous salutation. "What in God's name has happened to ye, man? Fighting *again?*"

Patrick glared at him. He did not like the implication of that *again*, particularly as he had seen a fleeting expression of surprise upon the pretty face at the other end of the car.

"Accident," said he, shortly and coldly.

"Well, well," boomed Cullen, sitting at his side, "ye look as if ye had been in mortal combat with the dragons of greed and power. Ye weren't down at Doyle's club to hear me speech last night?"

"I—was—not!" replied Mullally with what might have seemed unnecessary distinctness.

"You should have been, Sarsfield." (Mullally was known among his intimates as "Pat" or "P. S.", but the Honorable Edmund never used a consonant where a vowel was available.) "'Twas be far the best thing I ever did. I laid before them the situation of the country. They hung upon me words. The hall was silent as the tomb when I told them that butter would be a dollar a pound before the year ended."

Patrick thought of the little political club, half of whose members had lost their jobs, and moaned inwardly. He said nothing.

"How d'ye find business?" asked Cullen.

"Pretty good."

"Well, 'twon't last long," commented the orator solemnly. "Six months from now will tell a dismal story. The day of the honest lawyer is gone. The day of honest success be individual effort has gone. The individual starves, the corporation alone prospers. He is either a knave or a fool who thinks he can make money by individual

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work. Ally yourself with some large corporation, me bhoy, and partake of the corporation prosperity of the country. It is the only way."

Patrick looked at Priscilla and wondered how long she would stay on the car. Then he looked at Edmund and wondered how long *he* would stay on the car. He couldn't ask Priscilla, but he could ask Edmund, and he did.

"I'm on me way to the City Hall," replied Cullen. "The Mayor sent for me. Whether it means anything or no I am sure I do not know. He has deceived me twice already."

"Deceived you?"

"Yes—didn't appoint me," explained the Honorable Edmund. "When he accepted me services in the campaign; when without protest from him I addressed thousands in his behalf, I hold that it constituted a constructive agreement, morally binding. I am, I must confess, very much disappointed in him."

Patrick pondered the situation. He had quite made up his mind that matters must be explained to Priscilla. He did not want any embarrassing interrogations from Cullen, for the Honorable Edmund's conversational tones were rather high. Patrick was more than comfortably conscious, as it was, of the interest the other passengers were taking in him. At one time the thought of jumping off the car, buying new hat and trousers and washing his face, and then trying to overtake the trolley-car by taxicab, occupied his mind, but he dismissed that as too uncertain. If Priscilla got off the car, he would lose her. Priscilla remained, and so did Patrick and so did the wholly unconscious Honorable Edmund. The trolley-car rolled across the Brooklyn Bridge and stopped at Park Row, opposite the City Hall. Mullally and Cullen got out together and Patrick hurriedly shook his companion's hand and wished him good luck as he pushed him toward the park. Then he looked around for Priscilla. She had passed him while he was getting rid of the Honorable Edmund and he saw her white plumes in the crowd near the curb. He pushed his way through the throng and reached the roadway as Priscilla was settling herself in the tonneau of a big automobile, the door of which was being slammed by an elderly gentleman with a prominent nose, gray side-whiskers and gold-rimmed eye-glasses.

"I beg pardon!" exclaimed Patrick, making a leap for the running-board of the already moving automobile.

His blood-stained features thoroughly alarmed the elderly gentleman and he threw out his hand to ward off the expected attack. The rebuff toppled Patrick backward and as he rolled along the pavement, he heard a little feminine "Oh, Papa!" above the chug of the departing machine, the roar of passing vehicles and the angry exclamation of the traffic policeman who yanked him from in front of a team of frightened horses.

"Drunk or crazy?" asked the policeman.

"Only foolish," answered Patrick, who recovered his wonted mental readiness, as soon as he had a being not celestial to deal with. Then, recognizing in the policeman one of his father's constituents," he added, "Hello, Larry!"

"Why, it's Mr. Mullally!" gasped Larry. "What on earth were ye thryin' to do?"

"Too long a story," said Mullally with a smile. "Thanks for picking me up. Good-by!"

Patrick hurried to a clothier's for the purpose of replacing the suit of clothing that was now beyond redemption. As he transferred the contents of the pockets of the garments discarded to those of the new suit, he made a startling discovery. With the penknife, watch and lead-pencil in the breast-pocket of his loose Summer coat was a piece of jewelry that didn't belong to him. It was a small gold ring with a fine diamond set in it. Patrick looked at it in amazement for a second and then comprehension broke upon his mind. He remembered that the chatelaine bag had snapped open in the collision; beyond a question the trinket had fallen from it into his gaping pocket.

The young man felt his heart jump. It was a clue to the mysterious young woman, whose good opinion had so suddenly become a matter of grave importance to him. It gave him a reasonable excuse for seeking her. He examined it with care and his scrutiny resulted in another discovery which somehow did not add to his felicity. Inside the band was inscribed: "From Paul to Priscilla."

"Now, who the devil is Paul?" he grumbled. In deep thought Patrick went to his office and threw himself into his chair that he might think the matter over. He was still in a dream when the door opened and his father entered. The elder Mullally had

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a round face, a clear and ruddy complexion, laughing blue eyes and white hair and mustache.

"Hello, Patrick!" he saluted.

"Hello, father," answered the son, rising. "Sit down and have a cigar."

"Did you see the lots?" asked the older man, taking a cigar from the box on the desk and lighting it.

"Yes; they must buy. Besides they have encroached with the factory wall."

"We can sue them, then?"

"We can start an ejectment suit and a suit for damages by trespass, although it will be hard to prove substantial damages."

"Eh?"

"I mean that the money loss you have sustained does not really amount to much."

"But we can make them take the wall down?"

"Yes, they have no right on your property."

"Hum!" Mullally smiled. "Philip Ogilvie is the head of that corporation, my boy. In fact he *is* the corporation. It is the supply company of his Borough Transit Co. —the family graft, you know. You know Ogilvie—the head of the Good Government League. He is the fellow I'm after, you understand."

Patrick understood. Ogilvie was a "public-spirited citizen." Bill Mullally could respect and even like a Republican, but he had the utmost contempt for the "public-spirited citizen." For Mullally was really fond of Tammany Hall—"the organization"—like most of his kind. Those who believe there is no real sentiment in the relationship of a machine politician to the machine, are shallow philosophers.

Particularly is this true when the machine is an ancient, historical institution like Tammany Hall. The followers of Tammany may be somewhat misty as to general history, but they know the story of the "Republican-Democratic Party of the City of New York." It has its traditions, its ancient associations, its tattered battle-banners. And all these things its followers regard with affection.

To Mullally of Tammany Hall, Ogilvie was a renegade Democrat, a traitor to his own kind. Patrick understood that, whereas another man might have bought the half-foot strip of land for a song, Ogilvie must pay high for it.

In the days that followed, Patrick searched quietly but systematically for Priscilla. He advertised the fact that he had her ring in the "Lost and Found" columns of the newspapers. He went to police headquarters to inquire as to whether or not the loss had been reported. It had not. Fate played queer tricks with him. In the cage-like elevator of a tall office building, between the ninth and tenth floors, "going up" Patrick turned to look at the descending cage in the same shaft, and his eyes met those of Priscilla. He saw her face light up in recognition, and then the two cars passed. Patrick disembarked at the tenth floor and took the next car down. Priscilla was not in the hallway; he hurried out to the street. No sign of Priscilla.

A few days later standing on the forward deck of a Hudson River ferryboat, he noticed a neat little steam yacht, skimming up the river. His heart bounded at the sight of a young girl leaning over the rail. As the vessels passed close to each other he looked full into a pair of blue eyes that he knew. Priscilla flushed, then smiled, and as Patrick lifted his hat, she waved her hand to him. Patrick's soul sang songs to him. She had forgiven him! She was not angry!

Two days later the elder Mullally said to his son at the dinner table: "Pat, I've got Ogilvie!"

"How?" asked Patrick.

His father chuckled. "The old fellow bought the old crosstown franchise," he said. "They proposed to run a line in connection with the Borough Transit system. On the strength of it they doubled their bond issue. The Corporation Counsel has found that the old franchise is forfeited through the failure to comply with the ten-year construction clause, and they have had to come to the Board to have it validated by a new resolution. I've got him where I want him."

This welcome complication in the affairs of Mullally, senior, was followed by a visit from the old politician to the office of the President of the Borough Transit Co.

"You sent for me," said Mullally, as he seated himself across the desk from Mr. Ogilvie.

"I did," replied Ogilvie, taking his eyeglasses from the bridge of his nose and dangling them from his fingers. "It is about that Crosstown franchise. Our resolution seems to be locked up in the Railroad Committee and I understand that your influence controls that committee."

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Mullally stroked his mustache.

Mr. Ogilvie hesitated a second and then went on: "We have seen the Chairman of the Committee."

"You tried to bribe him," said Mullally bluntly.

Mr. Ogilvie's face flushed with sudden anger. "I did not!" he exclaimed.

"That's right, you didn't," said Mullally calmly; "it was your attorney."

"The unfortunate conditions of our city government constrain business men to do things they do not like to do, Mr. Mullally," said Ogilvie haughtily. "When a highwayman puts his pistol to your head and demands your purse—what can you do?"

"The modern ways seems to be to get into your automobile, run down and see the bad highwayman and offer him a thousand dollars or so for something that is neither his nor yours," mused Mullally.

Mr. Ogilvie gasped, just as if somebody had unexpectedly poked him in the stomach. The district leader's eyes twinkled. Then they became keen and bright as he straightened up and said: "Let us drop the humbug, Mr. Ogilvie. You want something and you are willing to pay for it. Isn't that the case?"

"I suppose so," admitted Ogilvie feebly.

"You've called me a grafter. You've sent money into my district to beat me. You're one of those Democrats that never vote the Democratic ticket. You've tried to bribe the Chairman of the Committe and now you are trying to bribe me. I don't like your kind of citizenship, Mr. Ogilvie. Good-day, sir."

Mr. Mullally jammed his hat on his head and, turning on his heel, strode out of the office, leaving a humiliated and speechless capitalist, gasping in his big office chair.

All the way up Broadway from the office of the Borough Transit Co. to that of his son, the elder Mullally chuckled to himself. It was only when he sat down in Patrick's comfortable arm-chair that he threw restraint aside and laughed until the tears ran down his cheeks. Patrick listened while his father told the story, the grin on his face indicating his sympathetic appreciation of his father's triumph. The smile was still in his eyes when he took from the hand of a messenger boy a report from the Pinkerton Detective Agency. He tore it open and read:

The white steam yacht that passed up the Hudson at 4 P. M., 15th inst. was the *Norida*. She is owned by Philip Ogilvie, President Borough Transit Co. Office, Equitable Building; home address, 1912 Fifth Ave. He has three daughters: Ruth, age 28, wife of E. H. Calmont, Martha, age 25, and Priscilla, age 22.

"Angels of Heaven!" exclaimed Patrick, his face the picture of dismay.

"What's the matter, boy," asked his father with considerable concern.

Patrick grinned weakly. "It's quite a story, dad," he said. "Sit down and I'll tell it to you." And he did.

"But you don't know anything about the girl, Patrick," said his father when he had concluded.

"Why, of course, I do. She wouldn't have a face like that if she wasn't the dearest girl alive," said his son with love's irresistible logic.

During all this time Priscilla Ogilvie had been a very much perplexed young lady. In the motherless Ogilvie household she had always been the "baby" and had enjoyed "the baby's" privileges. It had always been with her a cause of dissatisfaction that neither her father, nor her proud sister Ruth, nor her gentle sister Martha would consider her as a reasonable adult, but persisted in being amazed and delighted with what they called "her precocity." It was in rebellion against this that just after her graduation she had accepted Paul Perley's proffer of marriage. Paul was a fair-haired young man about her own age and, as he was the son of millions, there was no objection from sisters or father. On the other hand they absolutely disgusted Priscilla by saying it was "cute." "When the children got old enough, it would be a splendid marriage," was the way Philip Ogilvie expressed it.

There is a wide difference between the viewpoint of twenty and the viewpoint of twenty-two. At twenty, to Priscilla Paul had seemed to be a wonderful young man; at twenty-two he seemed commonplace. For one thing, he didn't have to work and he didn't want to, and Priscilla had shrewdly conjectured that there was something lacking in a man who devoted all his time to pleasure and for whom there was no joy in endeavor and achievement. Then there were other things. So, all in all, Priscilla was quite convinced that Paul was not her ideal. Still, she hesitated about breaking the engagement, as she did not feel that she had a right to hurt the boy. It was not until she

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discovered that other girls were just as attractive to Paul as was she, that she took the jeweled token of their engagement from her finger and put it in her hand bag. She made up her mind that she would break the engagement the following evening. But the following morning she lost the engagement-ring.

She made the discovery while dressing for the evening, after the exciting adventure of the morning. When an examination of the bag did not disclose the trinket, there was a frantic search of every other receptacle in which she thought it might possibly be. This unavailing, Priscilla threw herself into a chair to face the horror of the situation. The ring was gone. She could not dismiss Paul without returning his gift. The conclusion was horrible! It made her shiver. If Paul had been unacceptable before, he was impossible now that he was her doom. And when that evening Paul accidentally upset a cup of tea on his trousers and said, "Oh, pshaw!" she just hated him. Mr. Sarsfield had said——

Mr. Sarsfield! Perhaps if she could find that young man, he could help her find the ring. Hope bloomed again. Priscilla began to frame newspaper advertisements such as this:

> Will the young man with the nice brown eyes who smiles when he is hurt——

"Oh, nonsense!" the girl exclaimed.

"Really, now," said Paul, who had been unceremoniously interrupted in a narration of one of his personal experiences, "I thought it was rather interesting, you know."

"Pardon me, Paul," said Priscilla. "I was rude enough to be thinking of something else while you were talking."

"Why, that's all right, Priscilla," Paul good-naturedly replied. "You seem a little worn out this evening. I'll just get along and let you get your beauty nap. I owe Bessie Bowman a call anyhow."

Priscilla did not advertise immediately. Instead she went to the office of the trolley company and reported her loss. She also made a thorough search of the automobile and questioned the chauffeur. Then she went to the library and searched the city directory for the name of Sarsfield. She found two families of that name, and after some hesitation wrote a curt little note to each of them, simply asking if anything had been seen of a diamond ring which she had lost, she believed, while stumbling into a Brooklyn trolley-car. One Sarsfield replied on a postal card: "Never was in Brooklyn in my life and never want to be." The other did not deign to reply at all.

This was the situation when she saw Patrick as he passed her in the office building elevator. For several days thereafter she completely perplexed and disgusted her chauffeur by compelling him to drive up and down crowded Broadway. Hope was again dying when she looked down upon him from the rail of her father's yacht. She waved her hand to him instinctively. Then he and the ring seemed lost again.

"Priscilla," said her father one evening, "I have your ring. I did not know you had lost it. It was delivered to me this afternoon with this letter."

The girl took the ring and letter from her father's hand. The letter addressed that morning to Mr. Philip Ogilvie at his office, said simply:

> Dear Sir:
>
> A few weeks ago your daughter stumbled as she was entering a Brooklyn trolley-car and I had the good fortune to catch her before she fell to the floor. I later found a diamond ring which I am sure must belong to her. I am sending it you by the bearer and beg that you will restore it to her, and at the same time convey to her my regret for any pain my clumsiness may have occasioned.
>
> Yours very truly,
>
> Patrick S. Mullally.

"But—but—his name was Sarsfield!" said Priscilla.

"Whose name?"

"The brown-eyed young man—the one who tried to get on the automobile."

"His name is Mullally," said Mr. Ogilvie, his lips tightening. "He belongs to a low family. His father is a Tammany politician, a gra—" Mr. Ogilvie hesitated as the morning's experience flashed across his mind. "Well, he is a low person," he concluded.

"Oh, father—he has such nice eyes!" said Priscilla. It was the very tone in which Patrick had said to his father, "She wouldn't have a face like that if she wasn't the dearest girl alive."

Priscilla disposed of Paul that very evening. Then it occurred to her that common courtesy required an acknowledgement, no matter how formal, of Mr. Mullally's kindness. Accordingly she indited one. Thus it read:

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DEAR SIR:

Father has turned over to me your letter and the ring which accompanied it. Thank you very much for your kindness.

Yours very truly,
PRISCILLA OGILVIE.

P. S. I thought your name was Sarsfield.

If you are curious with regard to what occurred that August in Newport, you must read the reports in the society columns of the newspapers. You may note that Miss Priscilla Ogilvie was spending the end of the Summer with her sister at the Calmont Villa. It may interest you also to learn that at a certain base-ball game, the winning hit was made by "Pat Mullally, Princeton's old crack pitcher," who was visiting Neville Beaumont, his classmate. There was an incident of that ball game, by the way, which Beaumont prevailed upon the reporter for the local newspaper not to mention. A foul ball sped over the field to a group of girl spectators and struck one of them on the forehead. Patrick carried her to the dressing tent, and hovered around outside until, refreshed and just a little pale, she came out and, with her hands in his, thanked him.

Ogilvie did not leave town. It was a rather bad Summer for him. The franchise situation was pinching him uncomfortably; Borough Transit, earning no dividends, was selling next the bottom of a dull stock market, and bondholders were beginning to grow uneasy. The Railroad Committee paid no attention at all to the pressure exerted upon it by Ogilvie and the interests allied with him. August went by, and a fair part of September, and then, one sultry afternoon, Bill Mullally dropped into the office of the president of the Borough Transit Co. Mr. Ogilvie didn't suggest that he sit down and Mr. Mullally didn't sit down. He stood in front of the capitalist's flat-top desk.

"I called to say that I have changed my mind about the Crosstown franchise," he said.

A gleam of hope lighted Mr. Ogilvie's gray eyes.

"The last time I was here," the politician went on, "you thought I was purchasable." Ogilvie raised a deprecating hand. "Well, I am," said Mullally blandly. "I have a boy; he's a pretty good boy, and I have sent him to Princeton. Now he is practising law. While you and I have been fighting, it seems that my boy and your little girl, Priscilla, have been meeting and falling in love. If you let the girl marry my boy, the franchise resolution goes through. That's my price."

Ogilvie jumped to his feet, his glasses falling from his nose. "Never!" he exclaimed. "Look here, Mullally, I've just got to have that franchise, but do not ask me to mix my children in it!"

"I wouldn't—if they weren't mixed in already," said Mullally. "Ask Priscilla about it before you decide."

"But my girl has been used to certain luxuries——" gasped the capitalist.

"That's all right. The boy can take care of her. I wouldn't be what I am in politics if I wasn't a pretty good judge of men and, although I think a good deal of my lad, I know just the kind of a man he is. If things do not go his way, moreover, he is heir to three pretty good apartment houses, a few hundred thousands in U. S. bonds, a million in New York fours, a few minor holdings and two hundred thousand in Borough Transit Bonds."

Mr. Ogilvie looked at his visitor with increased respect. "Er—sit down, Mr. Mullally," he said.

The district leader did so. There was a tap at the door and a clerk entered with a telegraphic dispatch. "Excuse me," said Mr. Ogilvie, ripping open the envelope, and spreading out the dispatch. When he had read it he swung his eye-glasses around his index finger for a minute and then handing the yellow slip to Mullally he said: "Read that!"

Mullally read:

Priscilla has ceased to be a baby. Henceforth I am a matron. I married Sarsfield this morning in Providence. Love.

MRS. P. S. MULLALLY.

"Youth has a way of taking short cuts; the young folks go straight at a thing," he commented with a grin, as he dropped the dispatch on the desk. "However, Ogilvie, the franchise resolution goes through."

Mr. Ogilvie dangled his eye-glasses. "Yes," he said, "the young folks are straighter than we are. And I guess it's a good thing, too, because we—you and I, Mullally—are, I fear, a couple of—of damned old rascals!"

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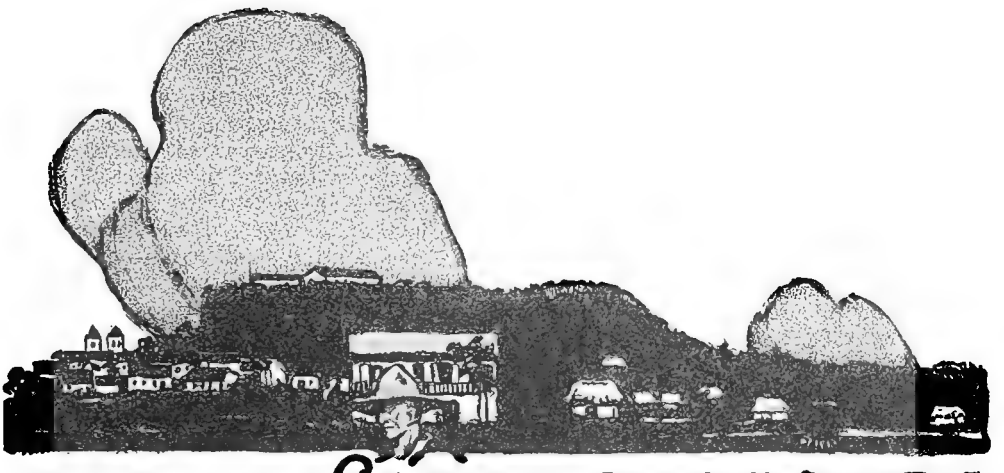

EXILES of THE OUTLANDS

TALES OF THE MEN THAT CAN'T COME BACK

by E. Alexander Powell, F.R.G.S.

"We took no tearful leaving,
We bade no long good-byes;
Men talked of crime and thieving,
Men wrote of fraud and lies.
To save our injured feelings
'Twas time and time to go—
Behind was dock and Dartmoor,
Ahead lay Callao!"

Kipling's *The Broken Men.*

ONCE, on the beach at Tangier, I saw a man immaculate in sun-helmet and white linen approach a tourist who had just landed from the Gibraltar boat.

"Are you an American?" he asked abruptly.

"Yes," said the other curiously, "I am."

"Then talk to me," pleaded the immaculate one, clutching the newcomer by the arm as though he was afraid he would run away. "For God's sake let me hear an American voice again."

Now that was homesickness—nostalgia the army surgeons call it—and there is no pain like it in all the world. And of those who know its pangs, none suffer as do the Men That Can't Come Back. All along the Edge of Things you will find them (Port Said, Djibuti, Lourenço Marques, Canton, Yokohama, Pago-Pago, Buenos Ayres, Montevideo, Callao, know them well) and though they are all very great blackguards and have caused much harm and sorrow and suffering, and though their photographs have been taken out of the red-plush albums and from the mantel-pieces in the sitting-rooms, their pictures still linger in the hearts they have broken, and that is why I am going to tell their stories but not their names.

Most of them were gentlemen in the beginning—bank presidents, cashiers, contractors, treasurers of corporations: you know the smug-faced, frock-coated breed—but the Opportunity and the Temptation met and in the end they left their country for their country's good, usually between two days, and nearly always they took with them other people's money and sometimes other people's wives. Shaven beards and assumed names and tramp steamers whose skippers ask no inconvenient questions of passengers who are able to pay handsomely for poor accommodation, help them in their flight and eventually they begin a new life under a new flag and a new name at Lima or Mogador or Macao. Some of them, and they are the most fortunate, have the courage to blow out their brains and so end the shame and the torture of it all; some go into business so that they may not have time to think; others drag out dreary existences in hotel bars and on hotel verandas, betraying themselves by their pitiful over-anxiety to dine and wine every fellow-countryman who comes along, in their

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eagerness to hear the latest scraps of news from that Home to which they can never go back.

A few of them wear the blue tunics and baggy trousers of France's Foreign Legion; some are helping various dusky rulers to hold down their unstable thrones; one is drill-master to an Oriental army and another is spy-in-chief at an Oriental court. But no matter in what far corners of the earth they have sought to hide themselves, they are fugitives from justice still, and if you should call them by their own names they would not answer and if you should approach them from behind and clap them on the shoulder suddenly you would find a pistol-barrel shoved against your ribs, for above them hovers always the shadow of the Law. So, while you will not forget that the men who slink or swagger across the next few pages have caused much unhappiness for their families and their friends, it will do no harm to remember that homesickness and ostracism and exile are punishing them just as surely as the bars and the prison-stripes.

Between the two oceans how many men holding positions of financial responsibility are there, I wonder, who, reading in the evening paper of the capture of a criminal in some far land, have not thought, "Ah, but I am cleverer than that. If I, with my intelligence, should ever take to crime and flight, they would never lay hands on *me*." How many bank cashiers, I wonder, who, harassed by the attempt to make income and expenditure meet, have not whispered to themselves, "How easy it would be for me to fill a valise with these banknotes which pass every day through my hands—fifty, a hundred, five hundred thousand dollars, even—and slip away from cares and worries to the shelter of some easier-going land. . . . A low-roofed, broad-verandaed bungalow beside an azure sea; a cane chair under the palm-trees and beside it a stand with cheroots and tinkling glasses; a happy, lazy land, *sans* telegraph, *sans* telephone, *sans* the subway at the rush hour and the clatter of the stock ticker and the raw March winds"—come now, be frank: how many of you have not dreamt such a dream as this?

But it is not worth while, my friends. Men as brainy and as brilliant as you have tried it, and a neglected grave south of the Line or a convict's number in a Northern prison marks their ends.

Given the opportunity, a man of coolness and resource and daring may succeed in getting out of the country with almost any sum. But it is only then that the real pursuit begins. From that day until he is in a casket or a cell the hunt never halts nor flags. The submarine cables and the wireless dash-dot his crime and his description to the uttermost ends of the earth; the *Mauretania* may not dock at Liverpool or an ocean tramp may not unload cargo at Port Limon that some quiet, keen-eyed man is not beside the gang-plank as the passengers come ashore, scrutinizing each in turn; his picture and his description hang on the walls of every consulate and shipping-office from Pernambuco around to Shanghai.

So closely is our mesh of extradition treaties and diplomatic understandings drawn, that to-day there is no single civilized country in which he can find a home. Let us suppose that he succeeds in making his way to some one of those few semi-civilized countries with which we have no definite arrangements for the surrender of fugitives—Morocco, perhaps, or Abyssinia, Afghanistan or Persia, one of the Central Asian khanates or the Central American republics. It will be only a matter of weeks, at most, before his presence becomes known and news of it is flashed to the detective bureaus of the world. The United States may have no treaty with the ruler in whose dominions he has taken refuge, but the Department of State makes a polite request through its Minister Resident or Consul-General for the fugitive's surrender, promising, perhaps, to reciprocate should opportunity offer, and the shah, or sultan, or president, as the case may be, preferring the good-will of the great republic to the gratitude of an escaped criminal, promptly lays rude hands upon him and sends him in, under escort, to the consul at the nearest port. He is sent home by the next steamer in the custody of a broad-shouldered, businesslike person and when he goes ashore the passengers crowd the rail to stare at him and at the thin steel chain which links his wrists.

Sometimes, however, the bonding companies and the police authorities decide that he is not worth the trouble and expense of extraditing and bringing back, and that, to my way of thinking, must be the worst of all, for then there is lacking the excitement of the chase and he is abandoned to his self-

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made exile, shunned by foreigners, sneered at by natives, a man without a country and without a home. The cool bungalow becomes a damp and silent prison, the cane chair and the iced drinks lose their first delight, the painted sea and the lazy palms he grows to hate; he longs for the sound of the familiar, friendly voices, for the roar of the street traffic and a whiff of crisp northern air, and one day he walks into an American consulate and gives himself up or, perhaps, there is a muffled report one night in the dim interior of the bungalow, and the native servant, stealing in at dawn, finds a lamp still burning and a packet of stamped and addressed letters and a huddled Something on the bed.

AN AMERICAN OUTCAST IN ATHENS

If you will lean over the bar of the Grande Bretagne in Athens, and if the shoulders of your coat are sufficiently broad and the toes of your shoes sufficiently round to stamp you unmistakably as an American, you are almost certain to be joined by a little, timid, side-whiskered man who will ask the privilege of buying the cocktails because he, too, is "from God's own country, sir." Within five minutes you will be sitting with him at one of the mosaic-topped tables in the corner and he will be plying you with eager questions about the new plays and the latest song-hits and if they still have the same leather easy-chairs in the lobby of the Hoffman House and is the air in the subway really good and how is the dining-car service between New York and Chicago. And so congenial does he make himself that almost before you know it you have accepted his invitation to drive down to Phaleron for tea and to dine at his house afterward. While you are chatting, in drops the consul-general whom you already know—everyone does drop in at the Grande Bretagne at cocktail time—but instead of responding to your beckoned invitation he shrugs his shoulders at sight of your companion and turns away. "Queer how touchy these consuls are," you say to yourself, and go on describing to your eager auditor Broadway's latest importation of prima-donnas.

At four o'clock to the minute he comes for you with a victoria and pair that would do credit to Fifth Avenue. The drive is interesting and you could not wish a better informed conductor. He does not seem to be on bowing terms with many of the people you pass, it is true, but you are too busy seeing the points of interest to notice that. At Phaleron you have tea on the terrace of the Aktion and eat a great many more *petits fours* than are good for you and lean back in your chair and listen to the strains of a Roumanian orchestra while you gaze out across the lazy blue Ægean and stand up with the others when the King, a timid, unhappy looking man in a naval uniform, drives by, and finally your carriage takes its place in the long procession of vehicles which winds its way back to the capital at sunset.

After passing street on street of Athenian villas, white, pale pink, pale green, pale yellow, the carriage suddenly pulls up at a house so obviously American as to be almost startling. It has red brick walls and brown stone piazzas and green blinds and a blue slate roof and taken altogether is a fine example of that type so common during the architectural reign of terror in the early eighties. An elaborate iron fence surrounds a stretch of well kept turf, iron hitching-posts in the form of expectant pickaninnies stand on either side of the stepping-stone and there are iron dogs and iron deer on the lawn. The hammock and the rustic chairs on the piazza are manifestly of American importation and so are the screen doors and the over-carved and over-gilded furniture within.

The hostess you find to be altogether charming despite her effusive manner and her peroxidized hair; your host fairly radiates hospitality and the dinner is above reproach. The talk is all about home, of course, and you mention the latest musical comedy success, which you saw the night before sailing.

"When we left home," says your hostess —and, oh, the caress in that word home— "they were singing 'Annie Rooney' and 'Two Little Girls in Blue,'" and going over to the piano she begins to play one of these melodies which was the hit of a yesterday long passed. But it is a song, commonplace and vulgar as it is, which brings the laugh which brings the groan, and in another minute she has whirled around on the piano-stool with her face buried in her handkerchief.

"Let's go home, Jack," she says, raising a tear-stained face, "I'm so homesick. Please take me home," and your host an-

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swers, "Yes, dear, we really must run over to God's country next spring and make a visit." And hastily making your thanks for an altogether delightful evening, you go out into the fragrant night, wondering why on earth any American lets business keep him away from his own land so long.

The next morning you meet the consul-general on the street. "I see old A—— lost no time in getting hold of you," he remarks. "Drive, dinner, music, good cigars—usual thing, I suppose? Well, I can't blame him much, poor devil. He's about eaten up with homesickness. Of course you'll pardon my not joining you yesterday but I really can't afford to be seen with him in public; official position, public opinion and all that sort of thing, you know. What? You haven't heard the story yet? A—— was president of a bank in Southern California. Man of unquestioned integrity, president of the local chamber of commerce, taught a Bible class, pillar of the church, leading citizen; began to speculate and then to peculate—easy step from one to the other, you know—and one fine morning the town woke up to find that its foremost citizen had skipped in the night with the wife of his best friend and a valise containing the bank's assets.

"Of course they set the Pinkertons on his trail and they caught up with him here, but in those days there was no extradition in Greece except for murder and so he was safe as long as he stayed inside of Greek frontiers. He liked it out here at first, but after a time the homesickness got hold of him and the woman and he tried to compromise with the bank, but they wouldn't have it and swore that sooner or later they would land him behind the bars. He can't get into any of the clubs—and Heaven knows the Greeks are not over-particular—and of course neither he nor the woman are received by any of the foreigners, though they built that big house you dined in last night in the hope that it would make things easier for them socially. Why, will you believe it, they had the plans for that house drawn in the States and brought over the furniture and the window-curtains and even the door-knobs so that they could imagine that they were back home. Pitiful, I call it.

"Take it all around, they are the two unhappiest people that I know. They talk home and they think home and they dream home and when they meet any one who doesn't know their story they always pretend that they are going there next spring, and all the while they know perfectly well that they would be nabbed the minute they set foot on shore at Port Said or Gibraltar or Naples. Just the same, I'm willing to bet a month's salary that old A—— does go home one of these days and face the music. There's no place like home, you know, particularly when you can't go there. Come over to the Grande Bretagne and have a drink."

FROM RAGS TO RANK IN A DAY

Shoved off by itself in the mountains of Central America, midway between the two oceans, lies Guatemala City, which, as everyone knows, is the capital of the republic of that name. It is not so many years ago that I was sitting with a friend in front of the Café del Globo, the one, you know, which stands just across the plaza from the archbishop's palace. It was during those stirring days which followed the assassination of President Barillas, when the country was still in an uproar and the new executive was trying to prop up the rickety chair of state. We sat in the grateful coolness of the colonnade, my friend and I, and over our coffee and sweet biscuits watched the motley procession of Guatemalecan life lounge by: *rancheros* in leather trousers and silver-trimmed sombreros, half-naked Indians sweating under their enormous burdens, tatterdemalion soldiers slouching along in ill-fitting uniforms of soiled and ragged linen, policemen with white gloves and Winchester carbines, officers smart in bottle-green and scarlet.

As we chatted over our cigarettes a man approached us; the most disreputable looking man, I think, I ever saw. His hair was as long as his beard, his suit of white drill was stained and torn beyond redemption, his feet were thrust into native sandals, and the wreck of a straw hat covered his head, but in spite of his appearance he approached us with a certain air of confidence as though he was so certain of himself and his position that the miserable rags he wore were a matter of no consequence at all. It was just the same air of easy assurance that I once noticed in a young British peer whose hunting clothes were ruined when his horse fell at a water-jump and who was compelled to go through the rest of the day wearing a suit

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of greasy whipcords he had borrowed from a stable-boy.

As I was saying, the Disreputable One approached us with as much confidence as though we were meeting in a club and were old friends. "You gentlemen are Americans, I am sure," he said, "and I am an American, too, though my clothes"—with a whimsical glance at his impossible garments—"would scarcely betray me, would they? And that is why I am going to ask you to lend me fifty dollars—I said *lend*, mind you."

Now, if some other man had said that we should probably have called the big head-waiter and had him kicked out, but underneath this man's shabby exterior were the unmistakable earmarks of a gentleman, so we asked him to sit down with us and poured out another cup of the atrocious coffee and called for more biscuits. One's impulses are given freer reign in these careless lands than would be possible or profitable in our colder and more suspicious North.

"Give us the yarn," we said, and passed him the cigarettes.

"You are the first people in two years who have treated me like a white man," said the outcast, his eyes filling with tears, "and I'll be square with you. I'm one of the men that can't go back. I got into trouble back home—no matter what, no matter where—and made the country too hot to hold me. That was two years ago, and ever since then I've been wandering through these greasy republics trying to earn a living. My last peso went yesterday, and, as you can see for yourself, gentlemen, I'm up against it. Seeing me in these rags, you may well doubt it, but I was a gentleman once myself and a graduate of a famous university and later on I held an officer's commission—but what's the use of talking about that.

"I asked you for the loan of fifty dollars, and if you lend it to me I'm going to get a bath and a shave and a hair-cut and some decent clothes and then I'm going straight to this new president in the palace over yonder and I am going to say to him, 'Mr. President, I am an American by birth and a soldier by profession and I know how to make soldiers out of these nigger scarecrows of yours—real soldiers that will stand up and fight. I am the kind of a man you need, Mr. President, for I am an American, and therefore I will stand by you as long as I take your pay; I am a gentleman by birth, and therefore I will tell you the truth. I have no political axe to grind, no party sympathies, no factional jealousies; you can trust me, and that is more than you can say of most of these gold-braided officers of yours.' That's what I am going to say to the president, gentlemen, if you will lend me the money to make myself presentable enough to see him—and you will get your money back."

We lent him the money; that goes without saying, for fifty dollars silver is only twenty-five dollars gold, which, divided by two, made only twelve dollars and a half apiece, which, after all, is no great sum to risk on a fellow countryman's chances of salvation. But, down in our hearts, neither of us really expected to see that money again.

Three days later we sat under the same colonnade of the same restaurant looking out over the same sun-bathed plaza at the same variegated procession. Leon, the big head-waiter, had just poured our coffee, when we heard the clatter of hoofs in the street behind us, but troops were passing and repassing, so we paid no attention. A moment later came the clink of spurs on the stone pavement and our friend the Outcast, resplendent in varnished boots and a uniform of green and silver, as trim and soldierly a figure as one would wish to look upon, stood before us.

"Here's your money, gentlemen," he said, tossing some gold-pieces on the table. "I thank you for the loan of it and I thank you still more for your faith in human nature. As for me, I'm Chief of Staff of the Guatemalecan army."

ERNESTO CLAY, ADVENTURER

My acquaintanceship with Ernesto Clay (this name is not his own, but it is near enough to answer the purpose) began off the little port of San Jose de Guatemala, where the Cosmos Line boat touched on the way from Valparaiso to San Francisco. The last berth on the boat had been sold at Panama, but that had not deterred the agent at San Jose from disposing of a few more. There is no harbor at San Jose, so we spent an uncomfortable morning pitching in the trough of the sea two miles off shore, while waiting for the usual consignment of fruit and coffee to be put aboard. But the lighter

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that came puffing out from shore, laden to the gunwales with cargo, brought a dozen passengers besides. As they started to climb the swaying ladder against the ship's side the German captain, a pompous, red-faced tub of a man, leaned over the rail of the bridge and, making a speaking-trumpet of his hands, told them with unnecessary violence that there was no accommodation left and that, tickets or no tickets, they could not come aboard.

Now, after you have sweated and burned with fever and shaken with chills and all but died from homesickness in a filthy, God-forsaken Central American village for two or three or perhaps six years, and have finally scraped together enough money to take you back to the States again, and after you have been counting the weeks and days and even the hours until the steamer sails, and after you have seen that same steamer lying out in the roadstead with her nose pointed to the North, with its theatres and its wet pavements with the street lamps reflected in them, and the restaurants with tables and shaded candles and men and women of your own kind sitting round them, it is not good to have a tubby German captain shout at you that you can not come aboard the boat at all and that you must go back to the swamps and the fever and the heat and wait six weeks until another boat comes along that has room to take you.

Out from the little group of disappointed passengers stepped a tall, clean-cut, clean-limbed American and thrusting aside the sailor at the foot of the ladder, went up it two steps at a time.

At the top the captain met him, his face purple with anger.

"Gott in Himmel!" he thundered, "Am I der captain uf dis ship er am I nod? I dells you der iss for you no blace und up you comes youst der same. Who der Teufel are you und vat pizness haf you on my deck ven to keep off I haf ordered you?"

"My name is Clay," said the American, very quietly and evenly. "You may have heard of me. The greasers down here think I am quite a wonderful shot. Your agent sold me a ticket to San Francisco and I am going there and I am going on this boat, and so are my friends down there. If you try to prevent us they will probably bury you under those two palm trees you see over yonder on the shore. You big, fat, German swine, you son of a Dutch sea-cook, how dare you tell a white man that he can't go back to a white man's country on your rotten old ferry-boat? If I ever hear another peep from you, my friend, I'll fill you so full of lead that you won't be good for anything but ballast. And after this remember to say 'Sir' when you address me."

Turning his back on the awed and speechless skipper, Clay beckoned his friends to come aboard. Calling a steward, he ordered him to carry the luggage into the steamer's smoke-room, which the man did in fear and trembling, and there Clay took up his quarters for the voyage. To reach the dining saloon it was necessary to pass through the smoke-room, but so notorious was Clay's reputation as a desperado whose finger was uncomfortably light on the trigger, that neither officers, passengers nor crew were hardy enough to enter the room without first asking the occupant's permission or even to ask his permission in the morning until they were sure he was awake.

At this time Ernesto Clay was still in the early forties and as fine a figure of a man as one would see in a week's journey. The name by which I have chosen to call him is not, as I have already said, his own. The name he bears is one of the proudest in the Old Dominion and there seems no good reason for adding to the disgrace and notoriety he has already heaped upon it. So vicious was the life he led at college that his father finally disowned him, and Clay, like so many others of his kidney, found more congenial companions on a Texan ranch. In a region where every one's hand was light on the trigger, a man with Clay's nerve and daring was certain to make a name of one kind or another—and Clay quickly made his as a bad man. Contrary to the best etiquette of the frontier, he carried his gun in a sling inside his vest and it was said that he could draw and fire so quickly that the eye could not follow the motion.

During a drunken brawl one night in a Texas cow-town he put his proficiency to the test, the other man fell with a bullet through his heart and Clay headed his pony for the Rio Grande. Wandering through Mexico in quest of fortune and excitement, he began to take part in the local *corridas*, his coolness and daring quickly winning him a national reputation and drawing enormous crowds to watch the performances of the *matador Americano*, as he was called.

Eventually he bought a ranch in the

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south of Mexico, where he entertained lavishly, the liquor flowing like water, but a slight difference of opinion with the chief of police of Vera Cruz resulted in the latter's dying quite suddenly with his boots on, Clay showing remarkable promptness in getting across the Guatemala border. Before he had been there a year his name was a synonym for cool-headed daring from one end of Central America to the other. Whenever a dissatisfied patriot felt that the best interests of his country—and, incidentally, of his own pocket—would be furthered by a change of administration, he sent for Clay, and it was this exiled American who, for a half-a-dozen years, played a considerable part in the blood-stained history of the Central American republics. Hankering for the sights and sounds of northern civilization, he returned to the States, but the over-readiness of his trigger-finger again got him in trouble, this time in St. Louis, his victim being a Mexican bull-fighter named Cervera. He was arrested, tried and acquitted on the ground of self-defence, but public sentiment made advisable a departure between two days.

A peculiarity of Clay was his habitual quietness of voice and manner. The more excited others became, the calmer he. His fund of profanity could not be matched in the three Americas, but he would utter the most hair-raising blasphemies in a voice as soft and silky as though he were making love. A musician of more than passing merit, he knew the German masters as most people know the arithmetic or the spelling-book, while his knowledge of the classics was equalled only by his knowledge of the under-world.

The last time I saw Clay was in the City of Mexico. A party of us, foregathered from the ends of the earth, were dining together in a private room of the Hotel Iturbide. The conversation eventually drifted around to fugitives and adventurers in general and so it was scarcely surprising that some of us should recall the exploits of Clay.

"If I ever met that blackguard," declared one of the party, a tall, lank Kentuckian named Hughes, "and he had the impertinence to offer to shake hands with me, I'd shoot him like a dog."

Even as he spoke the door swung open quietly, and as he paused the *moso* announced, "Señor Clay to see the gentlemen." There, framed in the doorway, smiling contemptuously and with one hand slipped carelessly into his vest, stood the very man whose name was on our lips. It was one of those amazing coincidences which occur more often in fiction than in fact.

"Good evening, gentlemen," he said, making a sweeping bow. "Permit me to present myself—my name is Ernesto Clay; some of you may possibly have heard it before."

Walking straight across the room to where Hughes stood glowering at him, Clay put out his hand. "I am particularly pleased to meet *you*, sir," he said in silken tones, "Won't you shake hands?"

Amid a breathless silence they looked into each other's eyes for a minute that seemed an eternity, two as fine specimens of manhood as one would wish to see, broad-shouldered, small-hipped, made of steel and wire and rawhide, taking stock of each other as do the bull and matador before the final charge and thrust. For a full minute they looked at each other without a word and then their hands met.

GREENE AND GAYNOR, STAR BOARDERS

Two gentlemen named Greene and Gaynor are just now living at the public expense in a large Federal institution in Georgia, because they made a slight error of judgment in thinking that it would be just as easy to hoodwink the United States Government in regard to the building of a certain breakwater as it was to deceive a village board of aldermen. The fact that their judgment in this particular case was grievously at fault is proved by the somewhat conspicuous pattern of clothing they are wearing at the moment.

They made another mistake in thinking that they could escape the long arm of the Federal law by crossing over the St. Lawrence River, on the further side of which they proposed to build expensive houses with the Government's money and to settle down to new and more or less happy lives under a new flag. My purpose, however, is not to recount the history of the Savannah breakwater frauds or of the Gaynor-Greene extradition case, but to relate the real story —for the first time, I think—of how the kidnapping of the fugitives by Federal detectives was foiled by an avaricious hotel keeper. It is a story which strikes me as having a distinctly humorous side.

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While the opposing lawyers were wrangling and arguing and calling for writs and subpoenas and caveats and body-warrants, the fugitives had settled down to enjoy themselves at a certain great hostelry in Quebec which rears itself high on a hill overlooking the river and the town. They were the hotel's most profitable guests, for where others ordered beer they called for champagne; where others ate ham sandwiches and enjoyed them they criticized the flavor of the caviare; where ordinary travelers were content with a room and a bath they occupied five-room suites, and, unlike the summer tourist, they did not pack their trunks at the end of a few days and flit back across the border, but stayed on and on and on. With the approach of winter and the departure of the last tourist, the American refugees became the mainstay of the hotel. Between their suites and their wines and the horde of sycophants that surrounded them they were as profitable to the management as a whole houseful of transients. Their loss would have been a calamity indeed.

But things could not go on forever thus. Federal justice may be slow, but it is almost as sure as death or taxes. Returning from a stroll in the early darkness of an autumn evening, Greene and Gaynor were set upon by a group of men who had been lurking in the shadows; an extradition warrant, signed by a Montreal judge, was thrust into their faces, and, despite their protestations, they were hustled into a carriage and rushed to the riverside, where a speedy launch was waiting with steam up to carry them into another and less prejudiced jurisdiction and within easier reach of American justice.

Quietly as the kidnapping was effected, it was witnessed by several passers-by and word of it was at once telephoned to the fugitives' hotel. Now the truth of the matter was that the Canadian Government was heartily glad to be rid of two such embarrassing visitors and hoped that it would never see their faces again. Not so the hotel management, however, and no sooner did the news of the kidnapping reach them than they bent every energy to bring back their abducted guests to occupy those suites at fifty dollars a day.

Telegraph keys clicked and telephone bells jangled. "We *must* have them back," said the manager in wild excitement. "We can't let our best paying guests be taken away from us like this. Why, we might as well close the hotel. Charter a special train. Order the fastest boat on the river to meet us at Three Rivers. Fill it with lawyers and police. Put in some sandwiches and champagne in case we rescue them—and don't forget to make a note of it on their bill, We'll get them yet."

And they did. Not on the river, it is true, for the launch bearing the prisoners paid no attention to the commands to "Halt, in the name of the King!" but sped on its way to Montreal. But so bitterly was the case contested on behalf of Greene and Gaynor by lawyers employed by the hotel, that the fugitives were eventually returned to Quebec jurisdiction, celebrating their narrow escape from extradition with a banquet, which, we may suppose, added materially to their bill.

But it is scarcely fair to enroll Messrs. Greene and Gaynor among the Men That Can't Come Back, for, a few weeks later, as the result of a decision by the Lord High Chancellor of England, they were turned over to American justice and did come back —in handcuffs.

THE STORY OF THE ENGLISH SPY

There once went to Sandhurst, which is the English West Point, an extremely nice young man. He was good looking and well mannered and as he happened to be the son of a marquis he had the privilege of tacking "Honourable" before his name. His people had a town house in Portland Square and a big place down Devonshire way, and as his social qualifications were altogether unimpeachable he had no difficulty in being gazetted into a very smart regiment indeed.

But it is an expensive luxury to be an officer in a smart regiment, as the youngster soon found out, for what with subscriptions to the regimental coach, and the regimental pack, and the regimental box at Covent Garden, and the regimental marquees at Henley and Hurlingham and Ascot, the rather liberal allowance which his father made him was altogether too small to go around. Then he got into the hands of the usurers and paid as much interest per week on the advances they made him as banks pay a year. He knew how to play cards, though, and so he began to look forward to the setting out of the green tables in the mess-room each night after dinner as a

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means of recruiting his finances instead of as an amusement.

Now this is a very bad state of mind for a young man to get into and what he should have done was to have gone straight to his colonel and told him the whole miserable business. But instead of that, he cheated. Every one at the table saw him do it quite plainly, but they felt more pity than anger for him and so kept their mouths closed, thinking it was one of those mistakes which all young men make at some time in their lives and that he would never do it again. But, finding how very easy it was to win money by cheating, a few nights later he tried it again.

Now the man who cheats once may be excused and forgiven, but for him who cheats twice there can be neither forgiveness nor excuse. His fellow-officers were painfully correct about it all, however, and instead of calling him a cad and a cheat they merely prefixed "Mister" to his name when they addressed him and very politely declined to play with him at all. And on top of all this, and to make matters still worse, if they could be any worse, it was found that his mess-accounts—he was treasurer of the regimental mess—were tangled up and that the food and wine and cigars had not been paid for. His regiment was stationed in Malta at the time and in the middle of the night his colonel came to him and advised him to send in his papers and to leave by a boat sailing at daybreak so as to avoid court-martial, both of which he did. He wrote to his father from Naples, asking if he could come home, but the crabbed old nobleman, inordinately proud of the family name and honor, sent him a draft for a thousand pounds with a message that he never wished to see his face again.

Began then a weary round of *pensions* and *table d'hôtes*—in the summer Lucerne, Lugane, Bellagio, Montreux; in the winter Biarritz, Pau, Mentone, San Remo, Monte Carlo—but after a week or so at each place some one who knew him in the old days would recognize him in the casino or on the promenade and from tea-table to tea-table the whisper would spread "That good-looking young fellow is Captain B——, the one, you know, who was cashiered for cheating at cards. Think of it; he actually cheated *twice!*" So then he would have to move on to some other place where people did not know him, but sooner or later they would always learn his story and shun him as they would the plague.

Later on, when his money was almost gone, he drifted to Constantinople, where Zia Pasha, the chief of the secret police, seeing the possible value of such a man, picked him out of the gutter, metaphorically speaking, and put him on his feet again. In return for which he became a palace spy. It was not a pretty business. His duties consisted in hanging about the bars of the hotels and getting acquainted over them with visiting foreigners and gaining their confidence so as to report what they said and thought and did and intended to do to the little, gray-bearded man at Yildiz. When he first went to Turkey he was still good looking, with the most charming manners, so he was admitted to the foreign clubs and the European society of the capital made much of him. But one day along came a new attaché to the British Embassy, who promptly recognized him, so he was dropped from the clubs without any ceremony and the ladies on whom he called were not at home to him, the servants said, and even the Levantine hotel-keepers told him quite brutally that they would prefer his room to his company. Only once did he distinguish me with his attentions. I was crossing the Sea of Marmora from the Prince's Islands to Constantinople with my wife and a young gentleman who was known to be a leader in the party of Turkish reform and who later on played a very brave and noteworthy part in the Turkish Revolution. We were sitting on one of the benches which run lengthwise of the rickety old Mahsuse steamers, talking in rather subdued tones—for in those days in Turkey it was not healthy to talk politics aloud—when the English Spy, as he was called, sauntered up and dropped into a seat directly behind us, where he could hear every syllable of our conversation.

Raising her voice so that it was perfectly audible across the crowded deck, Mrs. Powell remarked: "I am told that there is a spy here in Constantinople who was once an officer in the British army and who was cashiered for theft. Now he makes friends so as to betray them for Turkish gold. Can you conceive of any one who ever had the instincts of a gentleman sinking quite as low as that?" Scarcely had she finished when the man behind us rose hurriedly, his

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face crimson to the hair-line, and walked away.

Lower and lower he sank, so that even the notorious Samy Bey, the court dentist who was employed to extract secrets instead of molars, was quite a gentleman in comparison. On the evidence which he furnished, scores upon scores of men were sent to eat their hearts out in the fever-stricken oases of Tripoli or the Hedjaz while still others disappeared suddenly and were never heard from again. So when the Army of Liberation entered Constantinople in triumph that morning in April of last year, the first man for whom they sought was the English Spy, and if they had caught him they would have put a rope around his neck, and stood him on a stool under one of a long row of gallows, and a soldier would have kicked the stool from under him without any ceremony at all, and I, for one, should have said that he quite deserved his fate. But instead of that he escaped by the skin of his teeth, in a Khedivial mail boat, disguised as a stoker, and the last I heard of him he had made his way to Mellila and had enlisted in the Spanish Foreign Legion to fight against the Moors. If Fate is kind to him he may have the good fortune to go down fighting against odds, and thus make up in some small measure for all the sorrow he has caused and the homes he has desolated, by meeting his end like a gentleman and a soldier.

I have one more story to tell, but it is such a very strange and improbable story, and will meet with so many denials, that I rather hesitate to relate it for that very reason. But so mysterious and interesting is it that I will endeavor to repeat it just as it was told to me, and you can believe it or not, as you choose.

RANKING OFFICER OF THE LOST LEGION

The Man That Can't Come Back in this case was a very brave general and a knight to boot, who disgraced himself so irretrievably that the British War Office and his friends would be only too glad to bury his memory in oblivion and have everyone else do likewise. The facts in the case, briefly stated, are these: General Sir Hector Macdonald, commander-in-chief of his Britannic Majesty's forces in Ceylon, being accused of grave misconduct, hurried home to discuss the situation with the War Office officials in London. The authorities curtly ordered him to return to Colombo and stand his trial.

He left London for Marseilles, presumably to embark for Ceylon, but broke his journey in Paris, where he put up at a certain fashionable hotel. At noon on the fourth day of his stay he received a telegram and immediately went to his room. The following day Paris learned, as did the rest of the world, through the *London* news agencies, that Sir Hector Macdonald had shot and killed himself in a Paris hotel. From first to last the circumstances surrounding the suicide, the identification of the body and the arrangements for the burial were surrounded with the deepest mystery, which the War Office authorities and Macdonald's friends did nothing to dispel. A casket suitably marked was interred with simple ceremonies in a Scottish cemetery and thus ended the official career of one of England's bravest soldiers.

But a rumor that Macdonald was not dead almost immediately crept into circulation in official circles and would not down. Strange whispers began to leak out from the Paris police. Rumor after rumor, story after story, came from various parts of the Continent and later from the Far East, averring that Macdonald had been seen alive and seen by men who knew him so well that a mistake in identity was impossible. He was seen in Singapore, in Canton, in Hankow. But no sooner did these stories appear in print than they were met with vehement denials from his friends, who said that they, with many others, had seen a casket with a silver name-plate buried in a Scottish graveyard.

Last year a British army officer, who had served under Macdonald for many years and knew him intimately, made a journey of exploration into the interior of China, into the heart of that mysterious country, practically unknown to foreigners, which lies to the west of the Great Wall. He arrived at an obscure Chinese village on the eve of the grand maneuvers of one of the divisions of that army which is being trained in such mad haste to safeguard the empire from Japanese invasion and to bolster up the tottering fortunes of the dynasty.

Riding out upon the great drill plain the next morning to watch the yellow-faced, khaki-clad infantry at their work, he turned aside to let a European, wearing the uni-

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form of a Chinese general, go clattering by with his staff.

"It's Fighting Mac!" cried the Englishman, reining back his pony in utter amazement as he caught sight of the officer's face. "My God, it's Macdonald!"

But the other, without slackening his pace or looking to right or left, gave an order, and two of his staff-officers, wheeling their horses, informed the Englishman politely but firmly that he must at once leave the province, the secrecy of the maneuvers being the reason given for their action. And that there might be no possibility of his delaying, an escort was provided to see him on his way.

Now this, remember, is only one of a score of similar stories which are being repeated all up and down the China coast, and the officer in question is only one of a dozen reputable men who insist that they have seen Sir Hector Macdonald in the flesh. I have told you the story as I heard it and you can take it for what it is worth, but there is every reason to believe that precisely such a course on Macdonald's part would have met with the secret approval of the British War Office, for it would save the responsibility for an ugly suicide and the necessity for a still more ugly trial. Improbable as it may appear, many hold the opinion, myself among them, that "Fighting Mac," holder of a knighthood and a commission from the King, is the ranking officer of the Lost Legion, which, as all the world knows, is recruited from the Men That Can't Come Back.

AND A CHILD LED THEM

by

HARRY ALLYN

THE man who gave vent to that time-honored remark that "Boys'll be boys" was only jest about fifty per cent right. He ought to have added that they can be little devils as well. A boy's brain reminds me a whole lot of the wheels in an alarm-clock; keeps right on buzzin' along through the night when they'd ought to be restin' like any other piece of self respectin' machinery, and, just at the time when you're feelin' the most secure and comfortable, goin' off with a rattle like a fire-engine goin' to a fire over a cobble-stone pavement and bringin' you out of your dreams of the Elysian Fields mebbe with your hair standin' up on your head like the quills upon the scrappy porcupine—as Bill Sharkspire puts it.

Mebbe you'll think all this foregoin' is philosophy—but it ain't; it's facts. The

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philosopher who thinks he can fathom the internal workin's of a thirteen-year-old boy ain't been born yet—and ain't goin' to be for some time. And here's my example.

When the three-thirty night express pulled into the railroad yards at Franklin in a soakin' rain, Joe and I got off the head-end of the baggage-car in considerable of a hurry, aided some by the conductor with the law on one hand and a seven foot brakeman with a ten-pound lump of coal on the other. We watched the red tail-lights go out of sight down into the town with deep regrets in our innards and water-blisters on our feet, and without sayin' a word—sometimes language is inadequate to express such feelin's as our'n—stumbled down the grade toward a lumber-yard loomin' up through the darkness on the river-bank.

I'm fond of lumber-yards—there's so many dry, roomy places a traveler can stow himself away in—and almost directly we run bang up against a three-cornered pile of boards covered over with pieces of old tin roofin' to keep the weather out so's it could season properly.

We fumbled round it lookin' for a foothold, and after scoutin' the three sides of the triangle I give Joe a boost up, and he in turn passed a hand down to me. We shoved a hunk of the old tin one side and dropped in out of the wet, feelin' as if we'd run up against a branch of the Shelterin' Arms. The earth felt smooth and dry underfoot—almost too dry for the amount of rain that was patterin' down on the tin over our heads, and I went down in my vest for a match to see what sort of a place we'd struck. I dug out three or four, but they were too wet to be useful, so we snuggled up into one corner of the pile without any further curiosity and drifted off into as decent a sleep as our spongy condition'd admit.

We must have slumbered like the Sleepin' Beauty in the fairy-tale, dead to the world and all its works, for when I come out of my dreams of a porterhouse steak as big as a circus ring surrounded by growin' onions as high as Kansas corn the daylight was creepin' through the crevices in the pile and I was wrapped hand, foot and body with half a mile of old clothes-line and Joe still snorin' alongside in even a more bound-up condition than I was myself.

"Hey!" I says, rollin' over against him and jarrin' him out of his trance, "what in thunder do all this 'ere restraint of personal liberties mean?"

"Search me!" he responds, tryin' to raise himself up to a settin' posture, and not succeedin'. "Cert'nly we didn't crawl in here in this shape!"

"Prob'bly not!" I retorts dry-like as I could considerin' I was damp to the marrow of my bones, "prob'bly not! Still," I continues, throwin' in as much sarcasm as possible while layin' flat on my back and tryin' to scratch my ear against the earth, "there's no tellin' what a couple of durned fools like us'll do to themselves. Mebbe we've been wanderin' in our sleep and got tangled up in a rope-walk."

"Well," he says in a sort of a resigned tone of voice, "we won't have to stay here forever, for at the rate I'm thinnin' down, in four or five days I'll be able to crawl out of my duds through my shirt-collar."

Just then I heard a scufflin' kind of a noise somewhere inside the enclosure and, up out of the earth apparently, popped three kids of twelve or thirteen years old, wearin' black muslin masks over their faces, old slouch hats fastened up on one side with crossed daggers cut out of tin, a-lay Roosevelt, and one little cuss armed with a big old-fashioned powder-and-ball Colt's revolver a foot long.

"Good Lord!" I murmurs to myself as I caught sight of the outfit, "if here ain't Deadwood Dick and his gang of road agents!"

"Hist!" says the little murderer with the artillery, makin' motions at me with it as if he intended to blow open my safe and expose my innard feelin's, "Hist!"

And I histed.

"Pris'ners," he says in as low and impressive a tone as his little body'd permit, "you're goin' to be held fur ransom."

"I hope you won't make it too expensive," I says, feelin' that it'd be safer to humor him, "for fellers like my pardner and myself here sell in the open market for about fifteen cents a bunch."

"One—thousand—ducats—apiece," he responds, puttin' a long dash betwixt each word. "One thousand ducats apiece, or eternal imprisonment—an' torture!"

"Not a vurry allurin' prospect," I says, wonderin' if Joe and I couldn't pick up somethin' out of this ransomed captive game. "Not vurry allurin'. But I don't s'pose we're to be kept in this baled-hay

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condition for all that length of time, are we? And besides," I continues, seein' him hesitate, "our relations live a thunderin' long ways from here. This feller," bumpin' against Joe, "comes from Greenland's icy mountains and I was brung up on Injy's coral strand, and it'd be goin' against all the best authorities on the subject to keep us wrapped up for delivery until a purchaser comes along."

"Wait until I take a look," he says, and diggin' down into his jacket pocket he pulls out a yeller covered novel and goes porin' over the pages like a minister tryin' to rake a new text out of the Scriptures.

"You're right," he says at last, runnin' his grimy little finger along the lines. "It says here that the Robber of the Black Hills always treated his pris'ners with the greatest po-lite-ness an' con-sider-ation—after they'd swore not to try to escape."

"Swearin' comes easy for us," I says prompt-like. "But look a little further and see if it don't say somethin' about feedin' prisoners in the meantime? Cert'nly real up-to-date captives ain't expected to board themselves while they're waitin' to hear from home, are they?"

"I dunno," he says, peerin' down through the eye-holes of his mask and floppin' the leaves over like a printin'-press shufflin' out newspapers, "but I guess mebbe you're right ag'in, for if you was workin' you wouldn't be captives any longer. Uhuh, here it is: 'The table was spread with fin-est dam-ask, an' loaded down with jeweled ves-sels con-tainin' the choicest wines an' —vi-ands.'"

"That's the place," I hastens to say, kinder fearful that his spiritual guide wouldn't contain anything in the eatin' line. "That Robber of the Black Hills knew what was what. Of course," I continues, noticin' that all three bandits was somewhat puzzled as to how they'd reconcile a three-cornered lumber-pile with a high-toned robber's cave, "of course, we don't want to pin you down to high priced tonics and gold and silver plate, but how about some hunks of cold meat and a loaf of bread—or mebbe a bouquet of smoked herrin's and a bag of crackers?"

"That's all right," he responds sort of joyful-like to think we'd got around his textbook without actually breakin' any precedents. "Now we'll untie ye, and a couple of us'll sneak home and get some pruvisions while the other one stays on guard. You'll *have* to be guarded all the while, ye know," he says, wrasslin' away at a knot, "except at night when we have to go home, for the book speaks of it time an' ag'in."

"Stick to the book, bub," I says, havin' a mighty friendly feelin' for the author of it. "Stick to the book and we'll all have a good time."

It took some little time to get our clothes-lines off, and when we got up on to our feet to stretch, the four-foot outlaws acted at first as if they were kinder sorry they'd let us loose. But when Joe and I sot down comfortably on the ground again without breakin' up the band they begun to get quite friendly. Then I found out how they'd got into the enclosure without comin' down through the roof the same as we had. They'd dug a tunnel out under one corner and plugged up nearly all the cracks betwixt the boards with the dirt and a lot of old baggin' torn into strips, until the place was almost light- and wind-proof. Then they'd sneaked in four or five soap-boxes to set on and decorated the sides of the triangle with a lot of pictures cut out of the *Police Gazette* and other instructin' publications until it looked quite homey to us.

"I guess we're slated to spend quite a spell in captivity," I says to Joe as two of the band squirmed out of sight through the hole in the ground while the remainin' one squatted down on a box with the big pistol and begun skimmin' through the book for further information on the art of takin' and keepin' prisoners.

"I hope some of 'em smoke cigarettes," Joe says, searchin' through his pockets to see if he couldn't scrape up the makin's. "It'd add greatly to our comfort while we're languishin' here in durance vile awaitin' to hear from Andy Carnegie on the subject of ransom."

"It would so," I responds; "but don't let's get too dummed exactin' all at once, for I'm afraid it's goin' to be something of a tax on 'em as it is to keep two such empty vessels as you'n me filled up with eatables."

For a half hour we sot there watchin' our guard goin' over and over the pages, and then we heard the scufflin' and up through the hole come the other two members of the band loaded down with all sorts of stuff they'd swiped to make their captives comfortable. One outlaw had an old hoss-blanket and worn out quilt done up in a

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frazzled lookin' last summer's hammock, while the chief himself toted a fryin'-pan with the handle danglin' by one rivet, an old dark-lantern, and best of all for us, a paper sack containin' about a peck of potatoes, a sheaf of frankfurters and a loaf of rye bread half the size of a railroad-tie.

"How'n thunder are we goin' to cook these 'terriers'?" I muses out loud when I caught sight of the sausages. "It won't do to build a fire in here; the smoke'd give the snap away and mebbe we'd set the whole durned place on fire and get turned out of a happy home."

"That's so," says the bandit chief, takin' off his mask in a moment of forgetfulness to wipe the sweat off his little freckled face. "That's so; I'd clean forgot that we ain't got nothin' to cook over."

"I'll fix that," says the kid who'd been doin' guard duty. "My father's got a tinner's stove out in our barn; I'll chase home and get it—but you'll have to be careful of it for he'll prob'bly miss it and I'll have to take it back after you've been ransomed."

"It'll get good care, son," I says. "No self respectin' captive'd misuse the housekeepin' things; that'd be base ingratitude."

"And don't forget the charcoal for the fire," cautions Joe as the little feller flopped down through the hole.

He couldn't have lived far away, for in less than ten minutes we heard the fire-pot janglin' along up through the tunnel and in five more we had a fine little charcoal fire glowin' away in the stove, a string of frankfurters simmerin' and splutterin' on a wire over the coals and a hatful of potatoes roastin' in them.

There ain't no use in describin' how we et; it might make your mouth water. But we et until we couldn't get down another morsel, and as the last "hot dog" disappeared down Joe's hatchway, followed by the admirin' glances of the three outlaws, he voiced my feelin's to the limit when he lolled back on the hoss-blanket and says in a self-satisfied tone, "Me for captivity for the rest of my natural life!"

All the afternoon the whole of us sot there listenin' to the rain poundin' down on the tin overhead while we talked over the different methods of holdin' up railroad trains and stage-coaches, of burglin' banks and sub-treasuries, comparin' the fine points of the James Boys with the rude, coarse work of the Ford Brothers, and dwellin' feelin'ly on the more delicate eppysodes in the life of the late Mr. Tracy. Then it got near their supper-time and they hurried away, promisin' to be back directly with as many eatables as they could sequester without causin' a famine in their households.

When they got back we were there—nobody but an idiot would have flagged the eatin' proposition; but it made me feel somewhat alarmed to see the chief bring out from under his jacket a pair of rusty old leg-irons that looked as if they'd done duty previous to the Mexican war.

"What's them for?" I demanded in my harshest tone of voice.

"Fur you, of course!" he replies, settin' down a glass can of preserves and a big hunk of cheese done up in a newspaper. "I told ye this mornin' nobody'd be here to guard ye at night, an' the Robber of the Black Hills always left his pris'ners chained in his lair whenever he was away on one of his forays. The book says so," he continues triumphant-like. "And ye can't go contrary to that, can ye?"

Joe and I looked hard at each other. Clothes-lines was one thing, and real solid welded-in-the-fire ankle bracelets was another.

"I'm somewhat opposed to this ironin' business," says Joe to me, with a languishin' look at the eatables. "I worked in a laundry three days once and don't like to be reminded of the dark passages of my past life."

"Never mind," I says with a cautionin' look at him. "It won't do to go against the recipe-book. And look at all this 'ere food that's waitin' to be devoured. Let 'im put 'em on; it'll only be for to-night."

We sot down to a feed of home-made bread, cold meat and other excettrys while the outlaw chief clinked on the leg-irons, one cuff on me and the other on Joe, thereby chainin' us together, and after we'd handed them a few more thrillin' tales by the light of the old dark-lantern, they left so's to get home before they was missed.

After they'd gone, Joe and I laid down on the hoss blanket, pulled the old quilt up over us and, fastened leg to leg with a couple of feet of intervenin' chain betwixt us, went off to sleep to the music of the patterin' rain, thankin' our lucky stars that the Robber of the Black Hills hadn't seen fit to mention hand-cuffs as well as leg-irons.

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It must have rained like it did in Noar's time durin' the night, but bein' conscience-clear and stomach-full we didn't notice it until some time along in the early hours of the mornin' when I roused up from a vision of swimmin' in a brewery vat to find our dungeon cell with two or three inches of water all over the floor!

"Hey, get up!" I exclaims to Joe in some alarm. "The bedroom plumbin's busted and the water-works is emptyin' itself in on us!"

"Get up yourself!" he grumbles back, makin' an effort to roll over, but not makin' a job of it on account of bein' coupled fast to me.

"Looky here," I says, shakin' him by his shoulder, "this ain't no joke to be incarcerated in a lumber-pile with the tide raisin' an inch a minute and no life preservers handy!" And then he sot up and begun to sense how serious matters were.

"What's the cause of all this wet disturbance?" he says in the dark.

"You've got me," I replies. "But the effect is here all right, and it looks to me like movin' day for us was arrivin' on the run—and us seriously incapatiated from movin' very fast on account of bein' hoppled."

"Lord, but what a miser'ble pair of dum fools we are to let three kids go'n handicap us in this shape just on account of a yeller novel and a bite to eat!" he says in a sour tone of voice.

"We are," I meekly agrees. "We're worse—and more of 'em. But standin' here soppin' up water and sarcasm don't help matters any. We're due to get out on the roof and take a look at the risin' waters—or stay here until we contract a beautiful case of floatin' kidney."

I made a couple of steps forrerd, not rememberin' we was bound together by such strong ties as we was, and down we went into a foot or more of water—kersplosho!

I've heard sev'ral men usin' cuss-words, but I've yet to hear such a vari'gated assortment of vocal trimmin's as riz up about the time we begun tryin' to do the same. I just knelt there in the water in silent admiration at the way that man Joe tried to tell me what he thought of me. Bime-by, after he'd made his third or fourth pause for breath, I sorter suggested that the water was risin' fast and if he didn't want to go to heaven by the water route he'd better get on to his feet. That brought him—he ain't fond of water applied internally, and carefully keepin' step we groped our way across to the side of the pile.

I dunno's any of you've ever been called upon to do it, but I'd like to say that climbin' the side of a board-pile in the middle of the night with the water washin' and churnin' round below, and coupled by two feet of chain to a feller breathin' all sorts of hard luck words at everything human and otherwise, is one of the neatest tricks you'll ever perform—that is, providin' your hands don't slip off the boards.

Finally, after three or four souses and a careful timin' of my left leg and his right one, we managed to shove the tin aside with our heads and drag our stomachs up across the top course of lumber. It was refreshin'. The wind and rain blew into our faces as we laid there peerin' into the blackness for some signs of a dry port, but not a glimmer of light showed up in any direction. By lookin' down close to the base of our pile we could make out a lot of loose timbers and boards floatin' down against our three-cornered island, and it's a mighty good thing for us that it was three-cornered, or it'd been wiped off the map; for every now and then some big hefty chunk'd come jammin' down against it and go slidin' off on an angle for some place fifty or sixty miles farther down the river.

"Looks to me," I says as dry as I could, considerin' we were both soaked to the linin' of our souls, "as if we're goin' to have a freshet."

"Vurry probable," Joe responds, grittin' his teeth together pleasant. "Vurry!"

"It also strikes me that we'd better wait right here until daylight," I continues, "and see if them three little outlaws will come off in a boat and take us ashore and remove these 'ere bits of jew'lry we're sportin'."

"I ain't in favor of waitin," Joe responds, breakin' a four-syllable swear-word off in middle. "I'm as wet as I'll ever be—and I'm goin' ashore *now!*" and with that expression of independence, he swung over without consultin' me and made a plunge off into the uncertain deep.

Mebbe you've run across something in your life you figger was the limit of human endurance. But to be yanked off a ten-foot board-pile by the leg into three or four feet of cold water in a night so dark you could

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cut buttonholes in it ought to put you up in Job's class for patience.

I'm only human; never confessed to anything more so; and when I came splutterin' to the top, I want to say that Joe's previous efforts in the conversational line had nothin' on mine. I talked. I told him what a good-for-nothing, thoughtless, thankless cuss he was, and then for fear he'd mistake my meanin', stood there with the flood rushin' by me up to my waist and added to my first remarks until I could feel him shiverin' on the other end of the chain as if I had a bite on a fish-line. Then I quit and started to climb back upon the board-pile with him tryin' his meekest to keep step up the side.

By four o'clock it got a little lighter so's we could see if there was any other survivors besides us. 'Way off to the right, across about a quarter of a mile of yeller rushin' water, we could see the railroad bank lined with folks catchin' timber and boards. And a half an hour later, when they'd caught sight of us perched up on our little three-cornered haven of hope, out shoved a boat, one feller rowin' and another steerin'.

Lord, but how we did dislike to be caught fastened together, but after you've sot for hours on a lumber-pile with the cold chills scootin' over you you'll confess to almost anything so's you can hug a fire while you're doin' it.

They steered over, and when they caught sight of our rusty leg-irons they cert'nly gazed at us a-plenty.

"Two escaped pris'ners from the county jail, I reckon," says the man at the oars.

"You're all the kinds of a liar there is!" responds Joe as savage as a dull razor. "We're two blown-in-the-glass wise guys who let three kids four feet high make dod-gasted playthings of us!"

"You say it well," says the man at the steerin'-oar, givin' me a look, "but we'll have to turn ye over to the police and let them figger on ye just the same. *You* look a heap like the feller who busted into the laundry night 'fore last!"

"All right," I says, gettin' desp'rate, "go on with your nee-farious plot to railroad a couple of half-witted hobos to jail; it ain't got nothin' on our present predic'ment." And as they backed the boat up against the pile Joe and I stepped down into it, two soles with but a single thought, two feet what beat as one.

When we got up to the police-station I reckon more'n two-thirds of the population of the town was trailin' along behind to see whether we was bank-burglars, counterfeiters, or only plain every-day murderers. And when we was brought up in front of the desk I felt a heap like the last.

"Where'd you collect the antiquities?" inquires the desk sergeant.

I told him, lettin' ourselves down as easy as I could, and he come round from behind the railin' to take a look at the hardware.

"Great Thomas Byrnes!" he says, after he'd examined our connections. "These articles of wearin' apparel must have been made prior to the lock industry; they only snap on! Any durn fool can take 'em off by pressin' this dinky little spring!"

And I'm a prevaricator from the ground up if he didn't press on a rusty button that I'd thought was a rivet and the whole ankle bracelet fell off on to the floor with a clatter like an anchor-chain runnin' through a hawse-hole!

There's mighty few of my acts I'm ashamed of. I've been what some sour dispositioned feller has called a "social pariah" too long. But when I saw how Joe and I'd been made a couple of monumental come-ons by three kids hardly sizable enough to be wearin' knee-pants, it made me feel that my worldly education had been neglected in the primary class.

"You can go," the sergeant says, with a grin on his face that made me want to commit mayhem on him, "there ain't any foolish-ward connected with our county jail —and I'd hate to put ye in with some I've got downstairs; they'd have your shirts in five minutes. Beat it!" And follered by a general chorus of audible smiles from the fifteen or twenty other miser'ble loafers who always hang around police courts to see some other poor devil get it in the spinal vertebray, Joe and I tip-toed out of the station-house, feelin' the world wa'n't nothin' but a dummed hollow show after all.

And as we sneaked round the corner to hide ourselves down in the railroad-yard among the box-cars, I couldn't help but think of that passage in the Scriptures where it speaks about a little child leadin' 'em.

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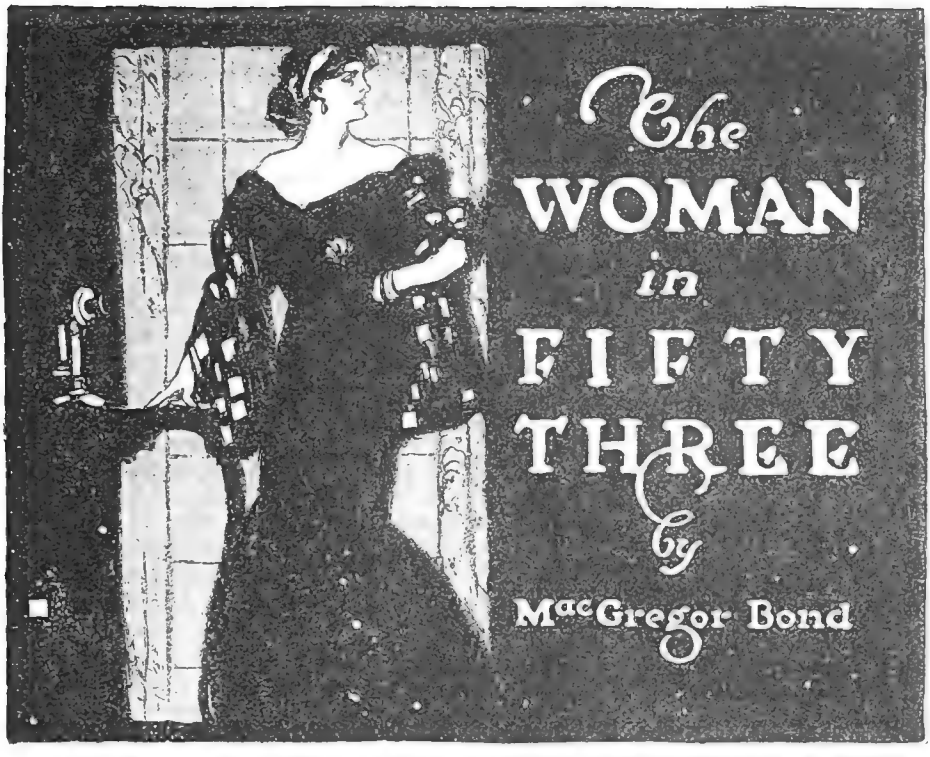

THROUGH the heavy panelled door that separated suites 52 and 53 came the startling report of a revolver-shot, then the dull thud of something heavy falling to the carpeted floor—and silence. In 53 a woman in evening dress stood terror stricken in the darkness, her hand on the electric switch, too stupefied with fright to turn it on. For a moment she stood motionless, her eyes trying to penetrate the blackness. The sound of footsteps on the marble floor of the hotel corridor aroused her to action and momentarily quelled her fear. Running across the room to a small desk on which stood a telephone, she picked it up and spoke to the operator on the office switchboard in low excited tones:

"There is something the matter in the next apartment," she said. "Somebody has been shot. Send up help—quick—please!"

She ran to the door that separated her apartment from that whence came the shot and listened.

"God!" she cried after a short pause, "he's shot himself!"

She staggered to the library table, clutching the sides for support; then buried her face in her hands. After a moment she looked up at the sound of the iron doors of the elevator at the end of the hall rattling and opening. She went to her hall door, opened it, and was confronted by an excited group of bellboys, porters and clerks.

"The next apartment," she said.

Like a herd of trained animals they turned and ran to the door of the next apartment. It was locked. They paused, nonplussed, and looked back inquiringly at her. In her fear, unable to understand their inaction and apparent stupidity, she turned away and slammed her door in their faces, and with a sob threw herself into a chair beside the table.

A large lamp with a heavy red shade shone on some magnificent and costly pieces of jewelry which glittered on the hard and smoothly polished surface of the table. About the entire apartment there was a general air of disorder which suggested a sudden attempt at departure.

Suddenly an authoritative knock on her hall door brought her to her feet with a sharp gasp. She paused, as though trying to regain her self-control, then went to the door and opened it. A burly man in plain

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clothes and two policemen in uniform confronted her. She shrank back.

"Don't be frightened, ma'am," said the burly man. "I am the house detective. The door of the next apartment is bolted and we don't want to break it open, as that would attract too much attention. We want to go in from your apartment."

He brushed past her and entered, followed by the two policemen. For a moment all three examined the lock of the door and peered through the key-hole which opened into the next suite.

"I guess we can get in from here," said the hotel detective. "The bolt is on this side and I have a pass-key which will open this lock."

The woman, leaning against the mantel of the fireplace, gazed in silent terror. She watched him like a frightened animal as he inserted the key in the lock. The two policemen waited expectantly. The look clicked. She turned away with a moan as the door opened, for she could just see the upper part of a leg and a man's shoe lying on the floor.

"Don't let any one in that room but myself and the police," said a voice to her that seemed miles away, after the three men had entered the room and one of them had returned beside her. She turned and looked at him. It was the house detective. She drew back unconsciously as she saw the glint of a revolver in his hand.

"I'm sorry that this has happened next to you, but thank you for telephoning so quietly. We don't want any of the other guests to know of this." He started toward the room of the suicide again, but she intercepted him.

"You haven't told me," she began falteringly, "what is the matter—is—is he——"

"Dead? Yes," replied the detective, brutally holding up the revolver. "One shot."

He jumped forward, for she had staggered as though about to faint. Unconsciously he placed the revolver on the table with one hand as he caught her with the other and assisted her to a chair.

"Don't be frightened, ma'am," he said. "It's a plain case of suicide. There won't be any complications. The coroner will be here and search the body. If it isn't identified it will be removed immediately to the morgue, so you won't have to sleep next to a dead one."

She turned away in disgust. The detective crossed the room to the door of the suicide's apartment, closed it and turned the lock.

"Will you please give me your name, ma'am?" asked one of the uniformed men, stepping forward and taking a note-book and pencil from his cap.

"My name?" she asked in sudden dismay.

"Yes," said the hotel sleuth interrupting, "the police have to have your name to turn in on their report at the station-house. It's just a bit of red-tape. It's the doings of the newspaper reporters; if they don't know everything they take it out of the cops, don't they, Murphy?"

"Bet yer life," answered that official with an enthusiasm that suggested experience.

The woman turned and looked at them intently for a brief instant.

"But I really know nothing about the affair," she said. "All I know I have told you. I was just entering my apartment, returning after dining with Mr. Chester Billings, when I heard a revolver-shot in the next apartment and telephoned down to the office that I thought something was the matter."

The fact that the speaker had been dining with Mr. Chester Billings, a name which stood for wealth and power in New York, made them look at her with increased respect, not to say fear.

"Don't you think," continued their involuntary hostess as she opened a purse and extracted some money which she handed to the house detective as though she were requesting a favor, "that just this once you could stand the criticism of the newspaper reporters and not mention my name?"

"I think we can," quickly responded the house detective, as he divided the bills into three neat little bundles and passed one each to the policemen. "Specially as you know so little about the case."

With an elaborate bow he nodded to his companions and all walked ceremoniously to the door.

"If you need anything else, ma'am, or I can do anything for you, just telephone down to the office." With another bow, somewhat raggedly imitated by the two uniformed men, the trio left her apartment.

She remained standing in the same spot, silent, looking in the direction of the room where the dead man lay, her face drawn and tense. After a short, stifled sigh she

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turned quickly and looked at the clock over the mantel; then with a gesture of loathing took a crumpled note from the bosom of her gown and read it:

When you receive this I shall be dead. Would to God I had the courage to kill you too. On my body the police will find a note telling them to go to you for an explanation.

She had received it just as she entered the elevator after her dinner with Billings.

Her eyes fell on the revolver, which lay on the table where the detective had placed it when he went to her assistance. He had forgotten it. Mechanically she reached out and picked it up curiously; one barrel had been discharged. There was still a faint odor of gun-powder. She smiled coldly and shrugged her shoulders. Suddenly she was brought to a realization of her surroundings by a knock. Hastily hiding the revolver under a folded newspaper on the table, she hurried to the door.

Chester Billings opened it, coat and hat on one arm.

"Olga!" he whispered endearingly, kissing her.

"Bob," she said, very softly kissing him in return.

"Well, dear," he said, "everything is ready—" He paused suddenly and contemplated her evening gown in a puzzled manner, "Except you?"

"I know, Bob," she said falteringly, "but you have no idea of the number of little things that have happened to detain me."

She looked up at him and smiled bravely, the soft red glow from the red-shaded lamp hiding the hunted look in her eyes and the deep lines about her mouth. "It won't take me ten minutes to slip into a traveling gown," she continued as she sat beside the table. "You're not angry with me, are you?"

"Of course not, dear," he said, smiling down at her. "Now listen. I have had an awful time trying to convince conscientious ministers that being married at midnight is moral. But with the aid of a check-book and a tale of lovers' importunity I have succeeded in convincing one reverend and bald-headed old chap that a midnight marriage is really the only proper and conservative way of getting married. So in half an hour we shall be married and on our way to Chicago."

She rose from her chair suddenly, an expression of disquiet on her pale face.

"Bob," she said in her quiet, restful contralto voice, "are you sure that you want to be married in this manner——" She put her hand over his mouth as he started to protest. "No, dear, listen. You are making a serious compact without even the knowledge of your mother." He tried to speak but she held up a hand. "Wait, Bob; you are young, impressionable. You don't know me, really. I haven't any social position and not much money—no, dear, wait!" she smiled again as he indignantly started to cut her short. "You must think now; to-morrow will be too late."

She stopped and looked intently into his eyes. A subdued murmur of voices from the apartment of the suicide brought a quick pallor to her cheeks. For a moment she turned away from him.

"What is the matter, Olga?" he said, taking her gently by the shoulders and compelling her to look at him. "You don't seem yourself to-night."

"I love you—very much, Bob," she said. "More than you understand. I would rather die—to-night—than ever have you regret your marriage to me."

She put her arms about his shoulders. "Suppose," she said very gently, "a doubt should creep into your love, an unjust suspicion come to your heart, your confidence be shaken and our happiness ruined?"

"Olga, I don't believe you love me, or you wouldn't say these things the night we are to be married!"

He sat down on the edge of the sofa, still holding his hat and coat, and gazed petulantly into the fire, while she stood looking fondly at his boyish figure. Her eyes filled with tears. Suddenly she knelt before him and seized his hands in her own.

"It is because I love you that I do say these things!" she whispered almost fiercely, her voice eager and trembling. She stopped, unable to say more.

"There shall be no regrets, Olga," he said, "to-morrow, a year, or ten years from to-morrow."

He suddenly turned away and walked to the corridor door; then came back and spoke in a forced and lighter tone: "Oh, I almost forgot," he said, taking an envelope from an inside pocket. "Here are the tickets for Chicago and the marriage-license, which I secured just before the bureau closed. I'll leave them here until I change, then I'll be sure to remember."

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She smiled as she picked them up and looked at them.

"I'll be back in ten minutes," he said, kissing her. She stood for a moment in his arms, then threw her own arms about his neck.

"I love you!" she said in a low whisper and, kissing him passionately, ran to her bedroom, closing the door behind her, leaving him looking after her confused and puzzled. Then with a troubled expression he left the room.

Five minutes later the woman reappeared, her superb figure dressed in a close-fitting traveling gown. She was pinning the collar with some small gold pins when the telephone rang.

"A reporter?" she repeated in a startled tone, unconsciously looking toward the door where the dead man lay. When she spoke again her voice was hard and cold.

"Tell the gentleman I am very sorry, but I have an important engagement and can not receive him this evening. Thank you. Oh, by the way," she said as an afterthought, "kindly send a porter up for my bags and call a taxicab for me in about fifteen minutes. Thank you."

She smiled coldly as she hung up the receiver and went into her bedroom, returning with a large traveling-bag which she placed by the side of the table. Going to the mantle, she took Bob's photograph from it and, kissing it, placed it in the bag. She passed into the bedroom again, coming out with a large picture hat and, crossing to the large mirror over the fire-place, started to put it on. A knock sounded on the corridor door.

"Come in," she said without turning, supposing it was the porter. "All right, porter," she said, as some one entered, "you can take my bag to the office and call a taxi for me in ten minutes. There is a small——"

She stopped suddenly and whirled around as she caught sight in the mirror of the man who had entered and stood looking at her with a quiet smile.

"I beg your pardon," she said; "I thought you were the porter."

"Almost," replied a quiet, good-looking young man, smiling at her mistake while he watched her keenly. "All but the first syllable. I'm a reporter, my name is Davis and I represent the *Morning Star*."

Her manner underwent a swift change. She contemplated him for a moment in silence. The two seemed to be measuring each other. He was a man of about thirty, clean-cut, determined. He wore a neat serge suit and carried a black derby and tan gloves.

"I'm very sorry," she said after a moment, "but I told the clerk in the office to inform you that I had an appointment and could not see you this evening."

"Yes, so he said," replied the reporter, "but it is about a matter of great importance, Miss Winters. I won't keep you long."

"How did you learn my name?" she asked.

"The house detective told it to me," he replied.

"Well, what do you want?" she asked angrily, crossing to the table and locking her bag.

"I want to ask you if you can tell the *Star* anything about the man who committed suicide in the next apartment."

She smiled, her eyes flashing, and then for an instant looked at him narrowly, as she answered: "I know nothing about the man or the affair."

"Did you ever see him while he was stopping here?"

"I have told you I know nothing about the man or the affair."

"Did you hear the pistol-shot?" asked the reporter carelessly, looking about the room.

"I was not in my room at the time," she answered impatiently.

"Where were you?" he asked looking at her, politely but determinedly.

"I am very sorry," she replied, looking at him coldly, "but I don't care to be cross-examined in this manner."

"Miss Winters," he said, "it isn't pleasant for a reporter to combat a woman in her own house but sometimes it is necessary. It is necessary to-night. Why don't you tell the *Star* what you know about this affair? It will be easier in the end."

"What has my business got to do with the *Star?*" she asked angrily, then turned and walked across the room. Davis' eye fell upon the railroad tickets on the table. He picked them up and smiled as he read them. When she had opened the door leading to the corridor as a hint for him to go, she faced about and saw him with the tickets in his hand. She stood motionless, a dangerous gleam in her eyes. Then she

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closed the door softly and locked it. She walked slowly down the room.

"How dare you do that?" she cried, her face white with anger, her hands clenched. "Have you no instincts of good breeding? I demand that you leave my apartment!"

"Can you tell me, Miss Winters," he asked, calmly, "why it is you are leaving for Chicago on the midnight flyer? Why a private compartment, why two tickets, when I understand that you are alone in this hotel without even a maid?"

For a moment she made no answer. Her eyes flashed and her lips curled in well-assumed contempt.

"Leave this room!" she commanded.

"Not until you have told me what you know about the poor devil who killed himself in there."

She smiled disdainfully and, shrugging her shoulders, walked nonchalantly toward the window, casting a quick glance at the clock over the fire-place. She stood silent at the window, her back toward the reporter. Then she spoke, very low and soft:

"You are using poor tactics, Mr. Davis. You are trying to force me into some confession of whose real facts you yourself are ignorant."

She paused for a moment. Davis placed the tickets on the table and as he did so his eyes fell on the marriage-license lying partly concealed under a newspaper. In an instant he was reading it. Involuntarily he gave a little cry. The name of the man was that of one of the most influential men in New York and the woman had been famous in a notorious divorce case of ten years previous, one that had been read around the world.

"I regret, Mr. Davis," the woman was saying, her back still toward him as she toyed with the tassel on the window-shade, "that I can not satisfy your unjust suspicions, but of course it is your business to——" She started and turned like a flash as she caught his tell-tale reflection in the window. In an instant she had sprung to his side and snatched the paper fiercely from him, her breast heaving with rage, her lips livid with anger.

"You are Mrs. Olga Meredith, the co-respondent in the famous Collingwood divorce!"

The livid whiteness of her lips and cheeks changed into a dull red. She almost tottered as she drew slowly back to the table and leaned heavily upon it. Like a woman in a spasm she tried to control herself.

"You lie!" she gasped.

"The dead man in the next room was Collingwood and he sent you a note not five minutes before he killed himself."

Davis was speaking quietly, but he watched her narrowly, for she stood crouched as though to spring at him. For a moment she made no answer. Then, with a feline movement that made her doubly attractive, she walked toward him.

Davis pulled a letter from the side pocket of his coat and held it out for her to read. A quick gasp was proof that she recognized the handwriting. Slowly, as though vaguely comprehending the importance of the evidence which he held against her, she looked up at him, gazing searchingly into his eyes. His face was inscrutable.

"What do you want? Money?" she asked.

"No."

"Well, what do you want?"

"Nothing."

"Then give me that letter!"

"I'm going to use that letter for the introduction of my story in the morning issue of the *Star*."

With a low cry she buried her face in her hands. There was something strangely moving in her despairing courage and helplessness.

But Davis went on inexorably: "When the morning *Star* is on the street all New York will be reading of the latest escapade of the beautiful Mrs. Olga Meredith and that popular young man about town, Mr. Robert Chester Billings."

The mention of Billings' name roused her. For a fleeting moment she turned and looked at the clock. "Is there nothing that will make you a little more human and keep this out of the paper?" she pleaded.

"No, Mrs. Meredith," Davis answered quietly. "It's been a grim trick of Fate, or perhaps merely Justice, that made Collingwood kill himself to-night."

"Are you making it any better by publicly spreading this insinuation of scandal against me and the man I am to marry?" she asked bitterly.

"You won't marry him, Mrs. Meredith," said Davis, a note of compassion slipping into his voice against his will.

Her eyes flashed defiantly, then turned to the clock in terror as the time went on and he still stayed and tortured her.

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"Mrs. Meredith," said Davis, "can't you see that this marriage is impossible? That after seeing the morning paper, he and all his relatives will see—excuse me—how he has been tricked?" He paused. "Have you never," he said, "loved enough to be unselfish once?"

She stood looking at Davis, a peculiar light coming into her eyes. Then she walked to him, so near that he could feel the warmth of her breath.

"You are a reporter, Mr. Davis," she began softly, "with the newspaper man's instinct for news blotting out every other sense. I am a woman of the world begging for the only happiness I have ever known. If you leave here with that story, you ruin my happiness and the happiness of the man who loves me."

She paused for a moment and looked toward the door of the room where the body of the suicide lay.

"You say I am responsible for the death of the man in the next room, that for his life I must sacrifice my love. What interest have you in this? Nothing—except your abnormal lust for news. Every time your presses grind out their thousands of papers they are crushing the happiness out of hundreds of hearts. You, and men like you, never see the shadows of those broken lives."

She stopped brokenly, checking a sob.

"My marriage to Mr. Billings means to you a good story, to the public a palatable morsel, forgotten in a day, but to me," she paused, "the happiness of my life for years to come! The man who lies dead in there never tried to make me happy. I was to him a toy, as many other women had been, and he allowed the world to scoff at me when I gave him the purest love that a woman can give—her first."

She mastered herself and went on: "Then I found that he was married—that I was not his wife and never could be ——" A spasm of pain flitted over her face. "It turned all my love to hatred. I was held up to the world as a wanton creature, a woman who invaded the sanctity of the home. The wife, the jury, you reporters who covered the trial, heard my story in sneering silence. After the trial I disappeared from the city until a few months ago. Then I met Robert Billings——" she stopped again, a light coming into her eyes. "In his presence I felt all my wounds healed—a new hope and joy in living. One day *he* saw me with Robert Billings," she nodded toward the door of the next room, "and not satisfied with the havoc he had already wrought—actuated by a sudden insane jealousy, he threatened me—unless —unless I went back to the old order of things. I was desperate. To-night we decided to marry—I prompted the decision because I was afraid."

She stopped wearily, a pathetic little droop to her head. She went very close to Davis, almost touching him.

"Everything was all right until you came. That is all," she added brokenly. "I have never hurt any one knowingly in all my life, and you men have hurt me even more than you understand. I only ask you to leave me alone, and let me have my happiness. Won't you?"

For the first time she broke into a wild storm of sobs. Suddenly she seized his hands and pressed a throbbing head against them. Both remained motionless, her whole body racked with heart-rending sobs. Very gently he led her to the sofa. She lay there with her head buried in the cushions. He stood for some time by her side, looking down at her grief. His face was white and his hands trembled like those of a man with palsy. From the struggle within him he turned suddenly, almost staggering to the corridor door, afraid to look back at her sorrow for fear he would weaken.

She cried out suddenly, looking up. "Where——"

"To the *Star* office," he answered in a low voice, avoiding her eyes.

"Then——" she staggered to her feet.

He raised his eyes to hers for a moment, then turned again toward the door.

"Yes," he said.

She faltered for a moment, then took several quick steps toward him. With a swift, passionate movement she turned him around by the shoulders and gazed searchingly into his eyes as though she would understand what manner of man he was. Her face was dead white and her eyes burned with undisguised fury. She made several attempts to speak, but failed.

"What—what—interest have you," she asked after a struggle to control her emotion, "that you refuse this, my one chance of happiness? Can it hurt or affect you in any way?"

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"Mrs. Meredith," he began, "I was sent here by my city editor to cover a suicide in this hotel. No matter what the truth, I must report the facts, and I know there is no power on earth that will make him overlook a good story. It is simply a case of duty. I must. It will be six hours before the *Star* is on the street, and you have tickets for Chicago—" he took out his watch and looked at it. "Why don't you go? Almost a quarter of a day's start—why don't you?"

She looked at him, dazed, as though unable to realize that every hope she had cherished was doomed by his cold blooded explanation. She turned away and walked steadily to the table. Her eyes straight in front of her, she sat down as though in a dream, her hands resting on the top of the table. She sat motionless, gazing into space, her body ice, and her brain fire. Suddenly her hands touched something. It was the forgotten revolver. She looked down at it in a vague sort of way. Then she remembered it was the weapon that had ended Collingwood's existence. Suddenly she started, her eyes flashed and her hands clenched spasmodically. Stealthily she grasped it, leaped to her feet, turned and leveled the weapon at Davis.

"Stop!"

Davis had reached the door; his hand was on the knob. Turning, he looked down the barrel of a glimmering .44 Colt.

"Give me that letter!" she commanded, advancing, the barrel of the revolver level with his heart. Davis was no coward, but there was no doubt as to her meaning. "No," he said, more from stubbornness than anything else.

"I never wanted to kill any one in my life," she said in her desperate, quiet voice, the revolver steady in her hand, "but I shall kill you to-night unless you give me that letter! *Give it—to—me!*"

A tense moment and then he thrust his hand into his coat and pulled the letter out, his movements controlled by the wicked gleam of the weapon. She came nearer to him, her eyes gleaming, her cheeks white. She reached with one hand to take the letter from him.

Then both halted as though turned to stone. A series of impetuous knocks thundered on the hall door, and the next instant came the voice—Billings' voice: "Hurry, Olga, hurry!"

The woman stopped. She dared go no further. Davis still held the letter extended, watching her closely and wondering what she was going to do. Billings kept knocking. The woman looked at Davis piteously; then, with a strangled sob, turned toward the table and dropped the gun under the newspaper, trembling with disappointment and anguish.

The moment she had turned away Davis hurried to the door and unlocked it. Billings stepped in, hurriedly, without seeing him. In the dim light of the red lamp he recognized Olga, who had her back to him, trying to conceal her emotion.

"Olga!" he cried, and then stopped. "What is the matter, dear?" What——"

Then he turned and saw Davis watching him.

"Who are you, sir?" he asked angrily, a tinge of jealousy in his voice. The woman attempted to speak, but her sobs choked her and she turned away again, leaning heavily on the table. Davis stepped forward and looked Billings quietly in the eye.

"I am a reporter. My name is Davis, and I represent the morning *Star*. I came here to ask Miss Winters if she knew anything about the guest who killed himself in the next apartment."

"Of course not! How could she?" replied the young millionaire angrily. "I only learned of it myself as I stepped out of the elevator and asked the policeman standing outside the door."

"I'm sorry I intruded," replied Davis as he made a slight bow and stepped toward the door. The woman turned. Billings stood with his back to her, watching the reporter. She held out her hands pleadingly to Davis, but he pretended not to see her. For her own sake he was trying to avoid another scene. Suddenly Billings turned and saw the supplicating action of the woman. He looked at her in amazement.

"Olga, dear," he said, "what is the matter? I don't understand!" She looked from one man to the other for a moment; then her arms fell limp to her sides. She seemed to change as she stood there. There was a new woman born in that moment. Looking into Billings' face as though trying to read his thoughts, she took a few short steps toward Davis.

"This reporter has something to tell you," she said coldly. But Davis only looked at her in silence.

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"Why don't you speak, Mr. Davis?" she asked almost insolently.

"I would rather not," he replied quietly.

"You don't dare!" she said as she crossed in front of Billings and faced him defiantly. Davis looked at her in surprise. There was something insolent in her tone that angered him.

"Mr. Billings," he began quietly, coldly determined, "Richard Collingwood, the steel millionaire who disappeared ten years ago after his wife divorced him, shot and killed himself in this hotel to-night. On his body he left a note for the police telling them to go to the woman in the next apartment to find the cause of his act. A reporter, not the police, found that note and obeyed its instructions. He found that woman to be Mrs. Olga Winters Meredith, the co-respondent in the famous Collingwood divorce case."

There was a death-like pause. Then Billings stepped forward, his eyes flashing and his hands clenched.

"You lie!" he cried, ready to strike.

The woman stepped in between. "No!" she cried. "He is telling the truth!"

Billings looked at her dazed, uncomprehending. He tried to speak, but she silenced him with a gesture of her hand. For a moment she looked at Davis. A peculiar light came into her eyes.

"I have heard of men like you," she said, "but I never really believed that they existed in the world! You have your story, but not quite all——"

"Olga!" Billings cried earnestly, "Don't——"

She silenced him gently. "No, Bob dear, I am not worthy of your respect—let alone your love. The reporter is right, for he represents the world. I was a fool even to think that I could have the love of a man like you," she stopped, tears flooding her eyes. "But I have loved you, Bob—more than you will ever know. Fate's been—we might have been so happy!"

"Olga dear," Billings cried, seizing her in his arms, "I love you! I don't care what has happened in the past!"

She took his face gently between her two hands, kissing him tenderly on the forehead.

"You think so now, dear boy, but you will understand better by-and-by. There," she said, kissing him again, "don't—don't mind. I love you—*always!* Remember that. You have been the one true happiness of my life. I don't want you ever to be unhappy, and you couldn't marry me with this scandal hanging over your head. There are others to think of—one of them your mother."

She looked into his eyes a long time; then gently, with ineffable tenderness, she kissed him full on the mouth.

Davis turned quietly away. There was a tightness in his throat that he wouldn't have admitted to his city editor for the world.

The woman walked quietly away, leaving Billings standing with bowed head. She paused as she got to the table. Her eyes rested on the shining handle of the revolver. Her sudden start made Billings raise his eyes, and with a cry he sprang toward her. His cry brought Davis from the window and he, too, jumped toward the table where the woman stood. Her hand went out towards the electric switch. The next instant the room was in darkness.

Davis heard Billings call out her name in desperation several times, there was a struggle, a chair was overturned. He tried to reach the table. As his hands touched the polished surface of the table, his eyes were momentarily blinded by the flash of the revolver, and a report stung his ears. The next second his hand found the switch, and as the light clicked on he turned and saw the woman lying motionless on the floor, the revolver in her right hand, and Billings bending over her.

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THE MYSTERY OF THE TWENTY SACKS OF COAL

by

Albert Kinross

MRS. GUNNER was one of the numerous ladies who let furnished apartments in Douro Crescent, Camden Town, London. Mr. Gunner, Mrs. Gunner's husband, had volunteered for the South African war, and being a sensible man, had never come back again. This is why Mrs. Gunner let apartments, and to this day she doesn't know whether she is a widow or whether Gunner, being sick and tired of her, went out to South Africa and changed his name and stayed there. She suspects the latter, for in candid moments she admits that neither herself nor married life agreed with Gunner, and that was why he joined the yeomanry.

Gunner failing her and left to her own indomitable resources, she had taken the house in Douro Crescent, Camden Town; and like the other houses it had soon filled up with actors, travelers, journalists and chorus ladies, and people who sang scales for hours on end and banged Mrs. Gunner's piano whole afternoons. Go down Douro Crescent on any day you like and you will hear them at it. Only the parrot-house at the Zoo can match and hold its own with Douro Crescent. And at night, when voices and pianos are silent, and even the actors and journalists are in their beds, stray cats take up the tale—dozens of them—and howl and yowl and banish blissful sleep. So that, all things considered and regarded as a whole, Douro Crescent may safely be described as a gay, a lively and exhilarating pandemonium. It certainly agreed with Mrs. Gunner.

This story, opening as it does at eleven-fifteen in the forenoon, finds Douro Crescent comparatively quiet. Only three pianos and a soprano broke the stillness, but above these rose the voice of a man who shouted "Coal!" Though pigeon-breasted and not noticeably stentorian in build, he shouted like a champion and you could hear him clear and deep above the three pianos and the one soprano. "Coal!" he shouted, and led a mild-looking cart-horse that drew his stock in trade from street to street.

You are probably familiar with the kind of horse and cart. The horse is large and patient and eats out of a nose-bag. The cart is black and open to all weathers—a platform on wheels where you may find coal to your heart's content, symmetrically arranged in sacks coal-colored. Crowning the whole affair is a notice board on which you may read the present price per hundredweight. To-day it stood at one-and-three. Yesterday, apparently, it had stood at one-and-five, for the man or his masters had scored the "5" out with a piece of chalk, and with the same material had substituted a large and corpulent "3."

Now one-and-three was dirt cheap for good or even for bad coal, and Mrs. Gunner, who by a fortunate coincidence happened that very moment to be plying her broom on her own front door-step, determined to profit by an opportunity as unforeseen as it

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was grateful. She was a rare one for a bargain and, moreover, she could always do with a bit of coal. She used it for the kitchen and for herself, and she used it for the lodgers. These were charged sixpence the scuttle, and the smaller the scuttle the better for Mrs. Gunner. She favored scuttles with large and flourishing outsides, but modest and narrow insides. One-and-three the hundredweight, worked out in scuttles, made two-and-six or even three shillings.

If the coal were good, however, she would keep it for herself; if it were bad, her lodgers would profit by the bargain; for she felt in a generous frame of mind that morning, and why shouldn't her lodgers sometimes get the benefit of their landlady's shrewdness and knowledge of the world? That morning she felt like a fond mother catering for its young. Presumably it was the weather that made her feel so wonderfully and angelically disposed; for to-day the sun was shining as it rarely shines in Camden Town, and a thrush had burst into song on one of the plane-trees that are so conspicuous a feature of Douro Crescent. "Hi!" she cried aloud, and waved her broom; and presently the pigeon-breasted young man who was shouting "Coal!" stood at her side. His name was Adam Newman.

"I'll give you one-and-three halfpence and take six hundred-weight," said Mrs. Gunner; "I'm a poor widow woman and can't afford a farthing more." In such-like dealings she always described herself as a "poor widow woman."

She had expected the pigeon-breasted young man to make a fight of it. He would stick to his guns and she would gradually rise from one-and-three halfpence to one-and-two, and so to one-and-tuppence-halfpenny. Perhaps, in the end, she might have to capitulate and pay the whole one-and-three. Instead, however, it was the young man with the pigeon-breast who capitulated.

"You can have 'em," he said, "and where's your money?"

"Make it one-and-a-penny and I'll take *eight* hundredweight," cried Mrs. Gunner. It must be simply awful coal, but she could easily pass it on to the lodgers.

Adam Newman, though pigeon-breasted and young, was no fool. "Gee up!" he shouted to the large and patient horse that ate out of the nose-bag; and the horse began to stir.

"Come back!" cried Mrs. Gunner. "Here's your money, every farthing!"

"Whoa!" bellowed the young man; and again that meek yet powerful beast obeyed.

Mrs. Gunner had found her purse. Reluctantly she made up the six-and-ninepence. Adam Newman held out his hand. The money was paid over and he dropped it into his trousers pocket.

"Now shoot it down the coal-hole," said Mrs. Gunner, and stood by, waiting for that familiar yet ever interesting operation to begin.

"I'm a country chap," said Adam Newman; "I don't know nothing about shootin' coal down coal-holes. I knows a good deal about poachin' though," and Newman chuckled.

"Well, here's the coal-hole, and I'll tell you how it's done. But what are you doing out with a cart o' coal in London if you're a country chap?" asked Mrs. Gunner.

"Ah, that's a long story," said Adam, and added, "Now what do I do next? Shoot it through there?" For Mrs. Gunner had removed the iron flap in the pavement through which all coal, good, bad, or merely indifferent, descended to her cellar.

"That's right, young man," said Mrs. Gunner.

Adam Newman, albeit pigeon-breasted and thin in the leg, was a wiry chap, well used to carting and carrying loads of weight. He shouldered a two-hundredweight sack and let its contents dribble through the coal-hole. He shouldered another and did the same. He shouldered the third and its contents wanted some persuasion; so he gave the sack a few good kicks and presently it emptied—almost of a sudden, leaving the flattened sack within his hands.

"Good-morning," he said to Mrs. Gunner; and "Good-morning," said she. And so these two parted.

Newman, shouting "Coal!" went through Douro Crescent and sold eight more hundredweight. By three in the afternoon he had disposed of his whole stock.

Mrs. Gunner mused for a while after his going. The fellow seemed new at the game, and had said he was. He carried two-hundredweight sacks, and they usually had smaller ones containing half that quantity. Most times they stuck to the price marked on the board, but he had come down three

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halfpence at once, and when she had tried it on, he wouldn't come down a farthing more. It must be awful coal, she agreed, and, feeling thus about it, she resolved first of all to try it on the lodgers.

The first scuttleful went up to a Miss Loder, who occupied the second-floor back. It was a bed-sitting-room, and the young lady had her own piano and went out every evening at seven o'clock. She said—and two-and-twenty photographs proved the truth of the assertion—that she was on the stage. Though punctual in the evenings, she was dreadful of a morning, and her breakfast, invariably a nice cup of tea and a kipper, was, just as invariably, taken in bed. Mrs. Gunner herself spread the collation and pulled the blind. "It's time to get up," the elder lady would say cheerily, depositing her tray and making for the blind-cord; but Miss Loder ate and drank the breakfast, and always went to sleep again and slept till ten, and sometimes straight away till noon or even later. She was, in short, a rare one for her bed. When she came home at night—and that was always after the cuckoo-clock in the hall had done its worst—she liked a fire, and Mrs. Gunner saw to it that she had one. There was a fire laid for her this very evening and her scuttle had been filled with the new coal.

The cuckoo-clock in the hall had cooed twelve times, the house and Douro Crescent were in darkness when Miss Loder, feeling her way up the musty-smelling staircase, returned to the bed-sitting-room. She lighted the gas and applied the same match to the fire.

"Aren't I economical?" she said aloud, and then she shook the brass kettle that always stood upon the hob. Mrs. Gunner had done her duty. "So that's all right!" exclaimed Miss Loder. As soon as she had popped on a dressing-gown and exchanged her boots for slippers she would mix herself a glass of something hot. She anticipated a pleasant hour in the armchair, her tiny feet close to the blaze, the "something hot" mellowing a wicked world, and she had come to the place in her book where the mystery of the masked murderer was sure to be revealed.

Miss Loder was truly happy. The fire wanted another chunk or two of coal. Mrs. Gunner was always sparing when she laid a fire. "One or two good big chunks," thought Miss Loder; and kneeling down before the scuttle that had been newly filled, she found herself eye to eye with something begrimed and woolly. It certainly was not coal; it was the best part of a human face and human head.

II

ADAM NEWMAN, having sold his coal, two solid tons of it, and feeling more at home with vegetables than minerals, had determined to change his latest mode of life. That same afternoon he began it, after a shrewd half-hour spent among the greengrocers. Now he could reel off the retail price of cauliflowers, of turnips, potatoes, spring onions, sea kale, and Brussels sprouts. Armed with this knowledge and information, he set out blithely down the Old Kent Road. Seven hours of steady driving brought him, the coal-van and the horse that ate out of the nose-bag to the farm-yard gate from which he had made his recent descent on London.

It was daybreak and the vegetable pickers were just astir. He himself had been a vegetable picker a week ago, astir at dawn like these. He had lived in a "hopper"-hut, been stood off or taken on, at the mercy of weather, seasons, crops, and glutted markets. He had been a casual laborer, living in a hovel, like these. To-day he had his own horse and cart, twenty empty coal-sacks and two-pound-something in his trousers-pocket. He sat up in his seat and watched the others go to work. They marveled at him and wondered where he had been and what had happened and what he was doing there at all; but Adam was very close and would give no definite news when questioned. "Been to London an' bought this horse an' cart," was all he answered; and "Yes, it's my horse, an' my cart." Further particulars were not vouchsafed.

The vegetable pickers went off to the fields; and there they stooped, the wet mud squelching under leaky boots. At the shed where the green-stuff was packed before carting, Adam waited for Miss Betsey Arrow. It was her farm and, on and off, he had worked for her, sleeping out in the row of huts beside the hop-garden. It had been a dog's life, but that Winter he could find no better job. Adam waited, and smoked a black clay pipe.

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"So you've come back agin?" Miss Betsey had found him and stood now in the yard.

"Yes, an' I'm goin' as soon as I've done my business," answered Adam.

"An' what may that be?"

"I want to buy a load o' vegetables off yer an' sell 'em in London. That's my horse an' cart," said Adam casually.

"You got a horse an' cart!" exclaimed Miss Betsey.

"Why not?" asked Adam; and then, "I'll do a deal wi' yer, if ye're reasonable."

"What's reasonable?" asked Miss Betsey. She was a weather-stained old thing and always took a lot of handling. She would stand and haggle an hour over a sixpence.

Adam stated quantities and terms. The quantities would load his cart, and the terms were one-third the prices he had learned by heart in London.

"I can do better'n that in Covent Garden," replied Miss Betsey.

"I takes the stuff away an' so saves yer cartin' an' railway charges; and I saves yer wot yer pays at Covent Garden. Yer can take it or leave it," and Adam was done. "If it ain't yours, it's Horley's," he added as an afterthought. Horley's was the next farm.

Miss Betsey caved in. She pocketed his money and sucked her hollow tooth.

Loaded up with fresh-picked greens and vegetables, Adam Newman drove up Windy Lane and took the road he had come.

"Sellin' sprouts from a coal-cart!" Miss Betsey had cried after him; for now that she had taken his money she was at liberty to let her thoughts run free.

"If I ain't got no other," had been the brief reply.

Going down Sunk Hill he had thrown fifteen of his twenty empty sacks over a hedge; and, "I don't want 'em, mebbe this ole farmer does," had accompanied the summary dismissal. Now Adam's face was turned toward London, and even toward Douro Crescent, Camden Town.

III

MISS GERALDINE LODER, in the deep and stilly watches of the night, had knelt before her coal-scuttle and, instead of Derby Brights or Best Wallsend, had found the best part of a human face and human head. She gave one loud, unearthly scream and dropped across the hearth-rug. Miss Loder had fainted.

"Drat them cats!" exclaimed the lodger in the room below; and that was all the present notice taken of the loud, unearthly scream and poor Miss Loder. The mistake, in Douro Crescent and at that hour of the night, was pardonable.

Miss Loder came to herself toward three A. M. She heard the cuckoo-clock in the hall proclaim the hour, and then she remembered. The fire had gone out and she was deadly cold; her teeth chattered as she crept downstairs to Mrs. Gunner.

The landlady lived in the basement and it was easy to discover her room because of the snoring. She lay on her back and snored when Miss Loder entered. The cuckoo-clock ticked and Mrs. Gunner snored; otherwise the house was black and silent. Miss Loder, guided by the snoring, found the bed and presently a fat and Sunday-joint-like shoulder. She shook it. How she shook it!

The snoring ceased. "Now Jim, if you 'it me, I'll 'it yer back," murmured the sleeper. She must have been dreaming of Jim Gunner, dead, departed, or lying low and saying nothing in far South Africa.

"Oh wake up—oh, do wake up!" now cried Miss Loder, shaking the massive woman with all her might.

Mrs. Gunner woke up. "Who is it?" she screamed. "Leave go, or I'll yell the house down!"

Miss Loder let go. "It's me—Miss Loder—Miss Loder from upstairs," she said.

"What *do* you want?" and, "Perhaps she's sleep-walking," thought Mrs. Gunner aloud. "You come down here, frightening the life out of me!" she added.

"There's a dead body up in my room—with the head off it!" announced Miss Loder.

"Oh!" shrieked Mrs. Gunner. "Where are the matches?"

She reached out her hand and found the box in its accustomed place upon the candlestick that always stood beside her bed. She lighted the candle and then said, "Well, I never!"

The two women blinked at one another for a space, till Miss Loder resumed with, "I haven't found the body, but the head's in the coal-scuttle. I won't go back to that room; no, not if you pay me!"

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At these words a light, stronger than candlelight, illuminated the corpulent landlady. "No wonder he let me have that coal at one-and-three half pence! I believe he'd have given it to me if I'd stood firm!" she cried.

"What coal, and who is 'he'?" asked Miss Loder, more alarmed than ever; for this was adding mystery to mystery, and, though she liked to read about them and such reading was her one idea of literature, a mystery met with in the flesh was horrible beyond endurance or support.

"I bought some coal this morning and the man let me have it dirt cheap," explained the landlady. "I filled your scuttle from it after my tea. Yours was the first one to be filled."

"And he had cut a body up in pieces and was getting rid of it that way?" Miss Loder saw it all now clear as a pikestaff. "Oh, the wretched murderer!" she cried. "We'll go out and tell a policeman; you must come with me at once!"

"You're sure it was a head?" asked Mrs. Gunner. She did not like the idea of leaving a warm bed for the chilly streets.

"Didn't I see it, and haven't I lain on the floor in a dead faint these last two hours? You go upstairs and look in the scuttle—I'll wait here for you!"

Reluctantly Mrs. Gunner got out of bed and threw on some clothes. Another candlestick was found and, armed with this, the landlady ascended to the second-floor-back.

Miss Loder had not exaggerated. Right in the forefront of the coal-scuttle Mrs. Gunner discovered the best part of a human face and human head. She gave one terrified glance and turned in a panic. She bolted downstairs to the basement.

"To think of it!" she cried. "To think that this should happen in a respectable neighborhood! Oh, Miss Loder!"

And the two women sobbed and had hysterics side by side.

They roused themselves at last and went to the back-door. Stealthily they ascended the area steps, and so to Douro Crescent. The street lay silent and deserted. They walked to the corner and reached the Hampstead Road.. There they found a large and stalwart policeman, and in his willing ears they poured out their whole story.

IV

ADAM NEWMAN, pigeon-breasted yet active, cheerful and alert, suspecting nothing, easy in conscience, health and pocket, was driving into London with his load of vegetables, and little did he suspect that the entire police force of the metropolitan city was looking out for him. Little did he suspect that all the evening papers were full of him and his late exploits as a coal-merchant.

Adam Newman was the villain of the hour. He had shot out fragments of a human corpse in seven places, twice in Douro Crescent, once in the Albert Road, three times in George Street (which is a very long street), and once in Homer Square. The police now had the whole collection; it was the mystery of the moment; reporters, editors and all the coal-dealers were agitated, active or upset. Hours passed, and still no trace of the young man. He had been described by all his customers of yesterday, and especially by Mrs. Gunner who had found the head. At last the four-thirty edition of the *Evening Planet* announced an arrest. A plain-clothes detective, on duty in the Old Kent Road, had detected a pigeon-breasted young man selling vegetables from a coal-cart.

No self-respecting detective could overlook a pigeon-breasted young man selling vegetables from a coal-cart and therefore Adam Newman was as good as under lock and key the moment Sub-Inspector Brace set eyes upon him. The cold-blooded impudence of the thing, the calm, self-contained effrontery! Sub-Inspector Brace had never seen such impudence. A man, wanted for selling coal admixed with the shattered corpse of his victim should stick to coal; by the selling of vegetables from a cart obviously built for the coal trade and still black from constant usage in that important branch of commerce, the fellow was positively doing his utmost to attract attention.

Sub-Inspector Brace followed the cart till assistance in the shape of an ordinary constable was at hand, and then Adam Newman, horse, cart and vegetables, was summarily arrested. The *Evening Planet* was therefore right.

"You might have let me get rid of these 'ere sprouts," was all he said in answer to

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the charges proffered against him. "They'll go rotten—I know they'll go rotten." And Adam Newman, too, was right.

The evening papers had announced the arrest. News had come in that a farmer down Wrotham way had found fifteen empty coal sacks in a field fresh sown with Spring oats—that explained Newman's temporary disappearance from London. And Mrs. Gunner, two other landladies and four ordinary females had been the heroines of the hour wherever they could find an audience. Even Miss Geraldine Loder had profited by the occasion; from standing in the chorus with not a word to say, she had at once been specially promoted to a speaking part with her name in good type on the bills and programs.

That evening Mrs. Gunner, the two other landladies and four ordinary females identified Adam Newman as the man who had driven the coal-cart which contained the body. He did not deny that he had driven the coal-cart; but he protested stoutly that he knew nothing at all about the body.

"Hanging's too good for him!" said Mrs. Gunner; and the sentiment was echoed and indorsed by every woman of that vengeful host.

V

THE body had been pieced together; even when washed it was scarcely recognizable; and so far nobody had claimed it. Dr. Schlesinger, the Government medical officer, analyst and expert, suggested that it must have come to its present state by means of an explosion. It had not been cut up, he insisted. Only an explosion could have produced those mangled remains upon which his knowledge and experience were now concentrated. But so far the police had heard of no explosion. This body, in brief, was rather a mysterious affair. Unclaimed, unrecognized, it seemed as though no one in all London had missed the victim or was mourning for him; and Adam Newman himself could throw little or no light upon the identity of that haphazard corpse.

Adam, charged with being in possession of human remains which he had retailed as coal at so much per hundredweight, appeared before a police-court magistrate at ten o'clock the following morning. The court was crowded and every newspaper in London had sent its very best descriptive writer. These men, some of them men of genius hampered by large families and a wife, uncapped their fountain-pens and drew a word picture of that dismal court. Adam was variously described as a "bucolic," a "rustic" and as a "typical son of the soil."

The first witnesses to be called were Mrs. Gunner, the two other landladies, the four ordinary females and Miss Geraldine Loder. These told their stories, with which we are already familiar. One and all had found fragments of the body admixed with the coal they had purchased. Excepting Miss Loder, all swore to the identity of Adam Newman. His pigeon-breast, it appeared, had struck the eye of all these ladies, and his countrified accent and appearance were only less easily forgotten. There was thus no difficulty as to the identification.

Sub-Inspector Brace then testified to the arrest and how he had given the usual warning. The prisoner's reply, "You might have let me get rid of these 'ere sprouts; they'll go rotten, I know they'll go rotten," had been entered carefully in the Sub-Inspector's note-book. Dr. Schlesinger, the Government medical officer, analyst and expert, next insisted on his theory of an explosion, adding that this view was unexpectedly supported and confirmed by a queer coincidence. "The remains themselves," he said with emphasis, "smell faintly of picric acid." "What is picric acid?" asked the magistrate. "The basis of all modern explosives," answered the triumphant analyst. The evidence of the other witnesses, including that of the farmer from down Wrotham way who had found the fifteen empty coal-sacks in his newly drilled oat-field, and that of the policeman who had been summoned from his beat in the Hampstead Road, need not detain us. Adam Newman was next allowed to tell his story. It was the moment for which everybody in court had been waiting. A deep hush fell upon that mixed and varied assembly.

Adam Newman's story, though told with the rustic turns and accents peculiar to Mid-Kent, will here be expressed in ordinary English.

Adam Newman said he was twenty-three years old and that till last week he had been vegetable-picking, hoeing and doing any other odd job that presented itself down at Bank Farm near Winfield.

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The tenant of Bank Farm was a Miss Betsey Arrow. A week ago, however, she had "stood him off" indefinitely, and, being sick and tired of casual labor, he had resolved to tramp it up to London and there, if possible, find regular employment. He had no friends in London and his capital was half-a-crown. The half-a-crown vanished, and he had found no regular employment; indeed, he had found no employment whatsoever. He walked the London streets and pondered.

He had heaps of time to ponder. Three days after his arrival he had decided to commit a burglary. He knew it was against the law, but he had often read about them in the newspapers, and almost always, so it seemed, the burglars got off with their booty and were never caught. It was worth risking. He was hungry, penniless and friendless; the only occupation open to him, he argued, was that of burgling. He might get nabbed and he might get put in jail, but every profession has its special risks. In the newspapers, according to his reading—Sunday was the day for that—the burglars usually got off safely and nothing more was said about it.

Fortune favored Adam. In a comfortable-looking house near one of the parks—being a stranger in London he could give no closer indication—he had found an open window. It was a corner house and the open window overlooked a small back-garden reached by a six-foot wall. It was late at night and he was the only person in the street. Adam negotiated the wall and dropped into the small back-garden. So far all had gone well; indeed, he harbored fond anticipations of an ideal burglary. . A none too easy climb now brought him to the open window. He entered the house by it and found himself in an unlighted room. He struck a match and caught the gleam of silver on a dressing-table. "What-ho!" he said. Lighting a second match, he looked for lamp or candle. There was neither. Subsequently he discovered that the house was lighted by electricity, but, having no present experience of such lighting, he was at a loss and continued to strike matches.

Adam had pocketed two silver-backed hair-brushes and a traveling-clock whose ticking had led him to the mantelboard, when the sound of approaching footsteps made him pause. The room in which he was operating was a bedroom; his matches had already shown him a large fourposter; rightly he concluded that its ordinary occupant was about to turn in for the night. The footsteps came closer, and Adam, like many a better burglar before him, dived beneath the bed.

Holding his breath, he lay there very quiet for several seconds. Some one had entered the room and switched on the electric light. Viewed from Adam's position underneath the bed, the newcomer appeared to be a gentleman. He had large feet encased in elastic-side boots, his trousers though striped were of a quiet pattern; the rest of him—he ceased abruptly above the knee—was absolutely invisible. This man took off his boots and put on slippers. He grunted as he did so, which caused Adam to argue that he could neither be so very young nor so very active. Presently the man closed the window and lowered the blind. Then he looked under the bed and discovered Adam. "Come out!" he cried; and Adam came out.

The pigeon-breasted young man now paused for a moment in his narrative. Never before, in all his life, had he spoken so much or addressed so large an audience. The crowded court, however, was all impatience and vaguely Adam felt that, far from appealing to a public unanimously hostile and assured of his guilt, he had at last convinced these people that, though appearances were against him and his clothes were third-hand at the very best, he was, in the main, as sober, as straightforward, as willing and as well-conducted a young fellow as ever spoke the simple truth and cleared himself of an appalling accusation. He felt that he was making a deep and satisfactory impression upon his audience—but "Go on!" now urged the magistrate; and Adam went on.

The man who had looked under the bed and cried "Come out!" was, despite the fact that he had grunted when exchanging his elastic-side boots for carpet-slippers, a very tall, a very robust, a very formidable adversary. He seized Adam by the scruff and shook him and set him on his feet; he stood over him and half-throttled him and cowed him.

"What are you doing here?" he asked and Adam explained, beginning with Miss Betsey Arrow, his poverty, hunger and unemployment, and ending with the news-

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papers and how they seemed to promise success and freedom from detection. The traveling-clock in his pocket was ticking loud enough to wake the dead; its owner caught the sound, and began by overhauling our hero and robbing him of the hair-brushes as well. "They're only electro-plate," he said as he restored them to their original position on the dressing-table.

This large and formidable man appeared to be kind-hearted; he listened to Adam's story and shook his large and formidable head. Suddenly an idea struck him.

"What you want is a fresh start in life!" he cried.

"That's it," responded Adam, and the two of them began to discuss the situation.

"I won't hand you over to the police this time," said Adam's host; "but if ever I find you here again, you'll be given in charge."

Adam replied that that was fair, and promised, if released, to do his best to lead an upright life.

"What's your name?" now asked his captor; and Adam told him.

"Well, Adam Newman, I'll look after you, but till I get you fairly going, you'll stay here as my prisoner."

So ended this strange nocturnal interview.

Adam Newman, so he said—and everybody in court believed him—had been led to the top-floor of the house and there he had stayed a captive for two whole days and nights. He was given plenty of food and a clean bed. He saw no one but the formidable stranger who had dragged him out from under the bed, and he was allowed "David Copperfield," "Nicholas Nickleby," and the "Pickwick Papers" to pass the time away. He enjoyed them hugely.

At dawn on the third day his captor entered the room and bade him rise and follow. Adam obeyed. Outside the house stood the horse that ate out of the nose-bag, and it was harnessed to the cart that had contained two tons of excellent coal.

"Now, Newman," said the stranger, "all this belongs to you. Go hence and prosper." And with that he produced a hawker's license and handed the same over to the jubilant Adam.

"Go and hawk coal," he pursued, "and hawk it wisely; you will already see that I have chalked the price up on the notice-board and that I have scored out the '5' and replaced it with a large and corpulent '3.' Women are easily deceived; they will think that they are getting one-and-five-penny coal at one-and-three. It is an old yet ever-successful dodge; for never do women learn wisdom—they are made that way."

The stranger during this discourse had seized the reins and invited Adam to a place beside him. Together they had driven away in the dawn; and whence they had set out and where they had ultimately stopped, Adam could no more tell than a babe unborn. London was all new to him, and especially its streets that were not central. He knew the Strand and could find his way to Covent Garden Market; he knew that he had reached the teeming city via the Old Kent Road. The rest of it was but a geographical expression.

A drive of several miles, enlivened by conversation and fatherly advice, and the stranger left Adam to his own devices. They said good-by to each other within earshot of the Zoo. The stranger said it was the Zoo, and they could hear the animals clamoring for breakfast.

"You and I will never meet again," said the stranger in parting. "No doubt I shall get news of you, but of me you will hear nothing nor ever learn my name. If you are the man I take you for, you will prosper. You, like all of us, may have to encounter adversity, oppression, bitterness and persecution; an innocent and steadfast heart, however, is stronger than man's wrong or hate. Farewell, young fellow; keep hope and courage alight within that pigeon-breast, and all will be right with Adam Newman."

So saying, the stranger departed on foot, leaving the youth alone with the horse, the cart, the coal and also with that unnamed, mangled corpse which Dr. Schlesinger averred was shattered by an explosion. The stranger had rid himself of the thing; deftly he had covered up his traces; and Adam Newman, friendless, humble, poor, was left to bear the brunt and pay the piper.

Though his story was believed, yet was that innocent youth remanded. The newspapers agitated, and frenzied reporters ransacked London. "Who was the man?" asked one and all. "Who was the man who had dragged Adam Newman from under the bed and locked him up and then released him and set him adrift with horse and cart and coal and that dismembered corpse?" A firm of coal-merchants in

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Kennington had sold the whole outfit—excepting the body—to a stranger who had paid in gold and driven the cart away himself. It was toward dusk and the man was quite unknown to them. He represented that he was starting as a coal-hawker and had produced a license. His money had been good, and that at the moment was all they asked or cared. This mystery, this grim, infernal mystery, baffled London. Mrs. Gunner had raised the rent of all her lodgers; Miss Geraldine Loder had become a Star, and lived now in a fashionable flat and owned a motor.

VI

THE Right Honorable Charles Dudley Pickersgill, his Majesty's Secretary of State for War, sat in his office and read the newspaper. It was a week after the police-court proceedings and Adam Newman's remand. Fresh clues had been started, followed and renounced. They led nowhere, and the mystery of the corpse that had been sold as coal remained as all-mysterious as ever. The Right Honorable Charles Dudley Pickersgill pondered. Then he picked his teeth with a small quill toothpick. He had just concluded a very satisfactory lunch, and the picking of his teeth in the aforesaid manner was among his numerous bad habits. His surname, Pickersgill, had no connection with this custom.

He laid the newspaper aside and wondered what he should do next. The army was giving little or no trouble at that moment; he had neither been asked nor had he answered a question in Parliament for several days; his office was fast becoming a sinecure. Being an energetic man and one full of ideas, he hated this enforced idleness. He was thinking over his various grievances when a secretary entered and announced that Professor Eastlake was in the ante-room, and wished to see him.

"Tell him I'm busy," said the Secretary of State; "or rather, keep him waiting for five minutes and then show him in."

The other retired, and Pickersgill pretended to be busy. Five minutes later Professor Eastlake came in through the Georgian doorway. He was a huge man, ordinarily red of face and bursting with vitality, but to-day he was pale and wore an anxious, worried look that quite startled the Secretary of State.

"What is it, Eastlake?" asked the latter after they had shaken hands. "You don't look well; you're run down; you're overworked, like me."

"Are we alone?" asked the Professor hurriedly.

"Quite alone."

"Then I'll lock the door."

"Nonsense, Professor; I'll give orders that we're not to be disturbed. A new explosive?" Pickersgill asked genially; for explosives were and are Professor Eastlake's greatest specialty. He had invented cordite, coprite and ileofwite. The last-named owed its punning title to the locality of its first trials.

Pickersgill had telephoned one short, sharp order, and they were safe from intrusion till he gave permission. "Now, what is it?" he exclaimed, and indicated a large green leather chair.

The Professor seated himself, depositing hat and umbrella upon the floor.

"That body they've found—you've read about it in the newspapers?" began the Professor.

Pickersgill nodded.

"And Adam Newman, the young fellow who was hawking it?"

Again Pickersgill nodded.

"They're worrying me," resumed the Professor. "But what was I to do? What am I to do? I place myself unreservedly in your hands, Pickersgill."

"As yet I've heard none of the particulars," replied the minister.

"That's true. The corpse is Lethaby's—he was my assistant, you remember—a very promising young fellow."

Pickersgill did remember Lethaby.

The Professor cleared his throat.

"Lethaby and I were working on mutite," he resumed; "you know all about that. Indeed, your Department has assisted materially in our experiments. You have been most generous—but Lethaby must have discovered mutite and perished in the moment of his discovery. *For I never heard any explosion!*"

"You'll forgive me," here interposed the Secretary, "but what is mutite? A public man has so many things to think of that occasionally there is a leakage—he forgets——."

"Mutite is soundless powder—hence the name." The Professor had risen and was striding up and down the Minister's sanc-

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tum. "There is smokeless powder—every army in Europe has it; but smokeless and soundless—that is mutite! No army in the world possesses mutite. The nation that first makes the discovery will be invincible; and Lethaby made it, of that I am sure! A year ago I promised you such a powder, a powder that would explode without betraying the presence of a rifleman, either by smoke or, what is all-important, sound. I promised you such a powder, and Lethaby no doubt discovered it. The secret of its composition perished with him; but I have hopes—he was working under my direction——"

"But what has all this to do with Adam Newman?" interrupted the minister.

"That is very easily explained," replied the Professor. "Lethaby and I had been working on mutite for the best part of a year. Our laboratories, as you know, are in a quite commonplace house in Kensington. Beyond our two selves nobody was ever permitted to enter the house. Sometimes when we were absorbed in our work we slept there. Lethaby slept there always—he was a terribly hard worker. A few days before the arrest of this Adam Newman I entered Lethaby's laboratory; and there he was and there was the laboratory—shattered!

"I had heard no explosion, and therefore, I insist, he must have made the great discovery and perished by its hand, so to speak. In the actual moment of triumph! Some precaution must have been lacking, some property of the new combination must have been left out of account—and he was working with one of the fulminates—they are always treacherous. The room was wrecked and so was poor Lethaby. I collected his remains, cleaned up the mess and faced the situation."

The Professor paused and applied a large plum-colored bandana to his forehead. The Secretary of State looked grave, but ventured no audible remark.

"I was between the horns of a dilemma," continued Professor Eastlake. "If an inquest were to be held on Lethaby, all would come out; every rival power would be in possession of our secret quest and maybe in possession of the key to its discovery. I know the formula of poor Lethaby's most recent experiments; the Coroner—officious fool!—would have demanded them. As an Englishman and as a patriot, what was I to do? Every foreign nation—France, Germany, Austria—would have been hot upon the scent. An inquest, with myself as chief witness, would have robbed this country of an advantage that no other power possesses. I concealed the death of Lethaby; I acted as a man and as a patriot. But the remains—how rid myself of them?"

"You passed them on to Adam Newman?" The Secretary of State had seen it all in a flash.

"Precisely. I found him concealed under my bed—I was so nervous after the strain of those awful days that for some time afterwards, before retiring, I looked under my bed. Heaven knows what I expected to find there! I found Adam Newman. He seemed specially sent by Providence. I could conceal the secret of Lethaby's death and dispose of the remains without offending any law or person. This young man—I tested him most thoroughly—was an entire stranger to London. He did not even know the neighborhood or position of the house; in short, he knew nothing except that he was destitute and friendless.

"I hit upon a plan; and within forty-eight hours of Newman's burglarious entry I had succeeded in acquiring a cart, a horse and two tons of excellent coal. Luckily, Lethaby had no friends—he was so absorbed in his work; he was unmarried and, last but not least, he came out of the Foundling Hospital. No one but myself would miss Lethaby; and the remains were unrecognizable. Our secret was, therefore, safe."

The Secretary of State for War had listened to this strange tale with scarcely an interruption. It explained the whole of the mystery that was so agitating London. "What do you propose to do next?" he asked at last.

"I place myself unreservedly in your hands," replied the Professor.

"If I were you, then, I would take a month's holiday and forget all about it," suggested Pickersgill.

"And Adam Newman?"

"He will be released. The police will detain him for a time, but ultimately he will be released. You must proceed with your discovery; the public service, the welfare of this country, can not stop to take heed of the imprisonment of an Adam Newman."

And that is why, to this day, the mystery of the corpse that was sold as coal remains unsolved, and, apparently, insolvable.

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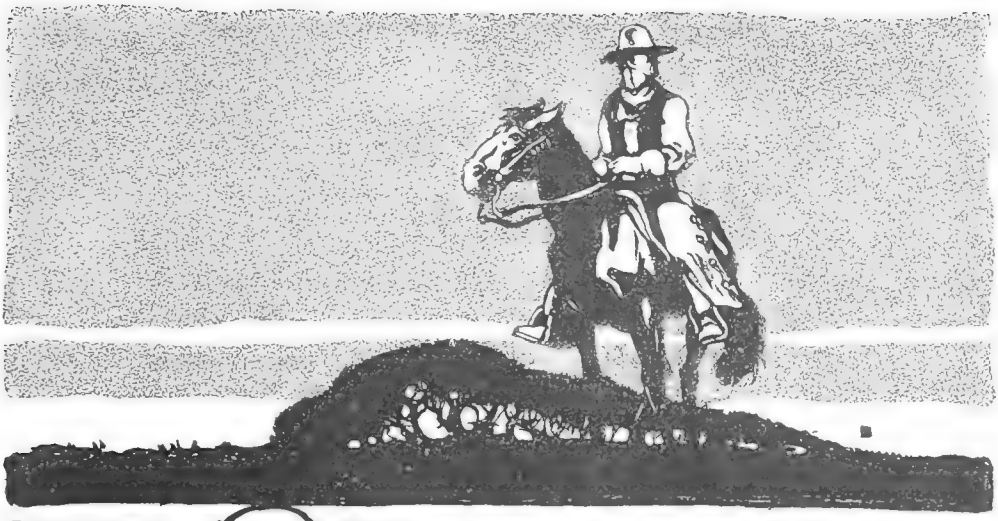

THE APOTHEOSIS OF FENCEDOWN SLADE

by Nevil G. Henshaw

THEY called him Fencedown and they meant it, using the implied accusation as the Scotch use their verdict of "Not Proven." When he first appeared on the Gulf range and went to work at the Circle K they had simply called him Slade.

As a puncher he had not achieved success. True he was quick and strong, a good horseman, a better shot, and one of the best ropers that had ever come to that section. But then he had also been a braggart and a liar and, as such, had earned small favor among his companions.

Thus, when he rode one afternoon to the nearby town of Kade and joined his fortunes with those of a stranger whom he met at Lopez's Saloon, there was little regret.

The stranger was an actor who had dropped off the combination baggage and passenger of the G. & I., thereby abandoning a cheap theatrical company that was traveling by this uncomfortable but inexpensive route from Beaumont to Galveston. He was small and slender and was rendered further effeminate by a thick crop of closely curling hair. As baggage he carried a small valise of yellow leather that had formerly been the property of the company's treasurer. His true name no one ever knew, for, upon removing his hat to wipe the dew of apprehension from his brow, he had been christened Kinky before he could replace it again.

Three days he stayed at the saloon in close, drunken communion with Slade, paying the score from the contents of the yellow valise. At the end of that time the two set forth to the upper boundaries of the Circle K, where they bought a small range of fifty acres from a Mexican herder. After they had put up a rough shack in its center and had stocked it with ten head of mangy cattle, they buried the yellow valise in a posthole, and called themselves the proprietors of the S-Bar-S.

During the ensuing season the punchers of the Circle K and of the adjoining ranches were continually bothered by broken fences and straying stock. At the Fall round-up the S-Bar-S branded sixty calves.

Now you may be sure that the range riders had no difficulty in placing a proper construction upon these two occurrences. They knew from the first that Slade and his partner were cutting their wires and were stealing their calves. Yet they could find no definite proof.

Grown suddenly modest and obliging,

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Slade would often ride over to inform them that their fences were down and would even assist them in rounding up the scattered herds. At these times he preserved a clumsy air of innocence that in itself should have been enough to condemn him.

So they called him Fencedown quite openly, and increased their vigilance from day to day in exact proportion with the increase of stock at the S-Bar-S.

One afternoon in the early Fall Fencedown and his partner lay behind a hillock upon the upper boundaries of the Circle K. Beside them their well trained ponies lay as motionless as death.

Fencedown waited until two-thirty and then sent Kinky to cut the wires. While this was being done he started a fire and produced from his bootleg a short, jointed brand. After he had thrust it into the hottest of the flames, he picketed the ponies nearby and sat down to smoke a cigarette.

He had scarce finished it when the stock of the Circle K began to wander through the breach and to come out upon the free, open range. They were fat and sleek, and with them were many yearlings that trotted along all unconscious of the Fall round-up.

Rising leisurely, Fencedown chose the most likely looking one of the lot and roped it with unerring skill. After his partner had thrown and hog-tied it, he assisted in dragging it to the fire where he notched its ears in the manner peculiar to the S-Bar-S.

He had just withdrawn his brand from the embers and, being particular about such matters, had carefully ascertained the state of its heat, when a small pinch of the sandy soil puffed suddenly up from beneath him and struck him in the face. An instant later a short, thin pop, like the snapping of a whip, sounded clear.

Dropping the brand with the quickness of the proverbial and appropriate hot iron, Fencedown straightened up and gazed before him. There was no perplexity in his movements, no startled glance about the horizon. Straight over the trailing wire of the Circle K he stared, knowing well both what he would find and where he would find it. As he did so a second puff of sand flew up two yards to his right.

There was a long pause during which Kinky, with ashen face and trembling knees, crept toward the ponies. Then the distant horseman thrust his Winchester into his saddle scabbard and wheeled sharply away.

"The damn fool!" muttered Fencedown contemptuously. "He could 'a' got us easy an' we'd never knowed. He sure couldn't miss seein' we was out of range."

He ceased his meditation abruptly and turned to his partner, who was hurrying up with the ponies, a rifle in his hand.

"What's that for?" he asked pointing to the weapon. "If he couldn't get us from where he was, how can you get him now he's gone?"

"But—but—I thought——" began Kinky tremulously.

"Quit thinkin'!" snapped Fencedown. "We ain't got time."

Stooping over the yearling, he released it with two quick slashes of his knife. Next he picked up the ropes and his iron, scattered the fire as widely as possible, and swung on to his pony. Half a mile off he curved in toward the nearby Gulf and threw the iron far out into the water.

"Well, Kinky, old hoss, it sure looks like they got us this time," said he calmly.

Pale and terrified and utterly demoralized, Kinky sat swaying in his saddle, the rifle still gripped unconsciously in one hand.

"My God! My God! What'll we do? What'll we do?" he kept repeating with the monotony of a piece of clockwork.

A look half of contempt, half of pity, came into Fencedown's face and he struck the trembling figure a blow between the shoulders.

"Here, stop that—quick!" he ordered, roughly, but not unkindly. "We got just one thing we can do if we do it quick enough. That was Jubilee Joyce jumped us. I seen his hoss. I know Jubilee an' what he'll do. He knows the boys are in town loafin' before the round-up, an' he'll go there 'stid of to the ranch. Likewise, he'll have to go round. If I start now I can beat him to it, an' get him as he comes in. If he ain't seen no one before then we may pull through."

"And I?" quavered Kinky. "What'll I do?"

Fencedown considered a moment.

"Go home," said he, "an' do the best you can. It'll give you time to turn round in anyhow. I'll play this out alone. You've come pretty clean with me an' I reckon I owe you the chance."

"An' besides, you wouldn't be no good nohow," he added to himself as he galloped away.

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On arriving at Kade, Fencedown drew rein at Lopez's Saloon—the first of the few scattered buildings upon the Gulf end of the little town. From its side window he could command an uninterrupted view of the road that led to the Circle K, and it was here that he stationed himself.

While he waited he considered the reason he could give in the event of his killing Jubilee Joyce.

All about him were Jubilee's companions, engaged in the more or less tedious occupation of killing time before the Fall round-up. None of them had spoken to him when he had come in. From being unpopular he had now become such a suspicious character that any of them would have been glad to lynch him upon the slightest excuse.

On the other hand, Jubilee was one of the most popular men in the outfit of the Circle K. Indeed, next to Cherry Turner, the foreman, he was the best beloved of them all.

After a moment's reflection, Fencedown decided that he would give Jubilee the first shot. Knowing well the quickness of the puncher's temper, he felt assured that he would shoot on sight. As he would come galloping in at full speed there was a good chance of his missing. Fencedown knew that *his* first shot would not miss.

Afterward even the most prejudiced of his enemies would be forced to clear him for the sake of justice. Surely they could not blame him for resisting an attack as he strolled innocently from the saloon?

It took Fencedown just one minute to consider the matter and to come to this decision. Ten seconds later he saw far up the road the heavy dust clouds made by a rapidly approaching horseman. In the events that followed he timed his movements with marvelous exactness.

Strolling leisurely to the bar, he ordered a drink and invited the landlord to join him —in Kade, a positive evidence of peace and good spirits. When he had finished he paused at the card table and made a mild comment upon one of the hands.

By now there came from outside the noise of muffled hoof-beats, plainly audible amid the sounds of the crowded room. Stretching his arms above his head in a prodigious yawn, Fencedown turned away.

"I reckon I'll hit a little sleep," he observed. "I sure ain't had none for three days."

In the doorway he paused as though undecided, while the hoof-beats rose to a veritable thunder. Then there came a shout, an oath, and the sudden, jarring crash of a Colt's forty-five.

Be it said to his credit that Fencedown drew in the shortest possible time after the shot—that he fired twice with unerring aim. But these actions were probably more muscular than mental for, even before he had crashed earthward, he was a dead man.

When the punchers leaped over his body and came out on the road, they found Jubilee hanging limply over the side of his snorting but still defiant pony. After they had borne him inside and had laid him on the card table he regained consciousness long enough to give them a brief description of what he had seen.

Cherry Turner, foreman of the Circle K, was both puzzled and distressed. In the space of one short hour he had lost a badly wanted cattle thief, and his own particular best friend. That in this time he had gained a second badly wanted cattle thief scarce seemed to relieve his feelings.

When, after listening to Jublice's dying disclosure, he had led a posse to the S-Bar-S he had felt little doubt of the immediate capture of Fencedown's partner. A notoriously bad horseman and one ill versed in the topography of the Gulf range, Kinky could scarce elude them for any length of time. Indeed Cherry was fully convinced that the rustler would choose the only decent course left open to him and would make a final desperate stand inside his ranch-house.

Accordingly he had led his men in a cautious but ever decreasing circle about the shack; he had advanced and had called upon Kinky to surrender, and then, receiving no response, he had drawn his gun and had walked boldly inside.

He had found the place deserted, peaceful —bearing not the slightest evidence of a hasty flight. He had found the stable undisturbed, with Kinky's well known saddle hanging from its accustomed peg. From the corral not a pony was missing save the one still standing dejectedly where Fencedown had left it before Lopez's Saloon. If Kinky had escaped he had done so on foot.

Having made these discoveries and having unsuccessfully scoured the adjacent country, Cherry rode back to Kade. Here he drew the toils as closely as possible about the mysterious fugitive. Through the medium of the telegraph he closed the G. & I. against

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him from the upper station of Bolivar to the lower one of Caplen, half way to Beaumont. Beyond this point it would be impossible for any one to pass unassisted and afoot. Also, as the news would spread from each of the stations that he had warned, the few scattered ranches in that desolate section would be both watchful and alert.

After which Cherry sat down to wait.

"He sure ain't got a chance," said he confidently. "Give him a day or two to get hungry and thirsty in an' he'll have to show up somewhere whether he wants to or not. Then he's our meat!"

But although he thus disposed of his puzzlement, his distress was a different affair. Cherry had loved Jubilee with the deep affection born of long nights spent beneath the same blanket, of long rides wherein knee had rubbed against knee, and at first he was inconsolable.

"If Fencedown'd only got some one else it wouldn't be so bad," he kept repeating, regardless of the feelings of the sympathizers who clustered about him.

Lengthy Williams, who held second place in the foreman's regard, finally created a diversion.

"Look here, Cherry," said he, "this ain't like you. Why don't you quit whinin' an' play out your hand? Jubilee's dead—too dead to skin—an' all the whinin' in the world won't bring him back again. S'pose he was alive an' goin' on a tear, or gettin' married, or some such play, what'd you do? Give him a good send-off, wouldn't you? Looks like it's the only thing we got left."

The effect was magical. Dropping his grief as one sheds a garment, Cherry rose instantly to the occasion.

"Lengthy," he cried, "if Solomon was to come playin' round you they'd put him in the dangerous ward. When I get through playin' out this hand the people in Kade'll be committin' suicide for the privilege of bein' buried. I hereby appoint you an' myself as a committee on arrangements, with the rest of the boys drawin' cards."

Before night he had mapped out his program, had attended to the details, and had collected, by popular subscription, an amount far in excess of his needs.

The affair was to be conducted upon a scale of grandeur scarce dreamed of at Kade. Invitations were sent to the farthest of the surrounding ranches, thereby guaranteeing an imposing cortège. A three-hundred-dollar coffin was ordered to be shipped from Beaumont together with a profusion of flowers. A minister was even discussed, but was finally discarded on account of a well-known antipathy of Jubilee's. As a compromise Lengthy promised to read the services, assisted by Cherry, who would afterwards deliver a eulogy upon the well-known virtues of his departed friend.

In lieu of a hearse a spring-wagon was hastily painted and varnished, and, to top the climax, at a late hour Cherry discovered an orchestra of three itinerant Mexicans that had been stranded in Lopez's Saloon.

As the weather was very warm, despite the lateness of the year, it was decided that the procession would start coincident with the arrival of the coffin and the afternoon train. Thus also would many guests be able to arrive from a distance, departing four hours later upon the train's return to Beaumont.

That night Cherry stayed at Kade. He did not eat, he did not smoke, he scarce closed his eyes, so engrossed was he in planning fresh grandeurs.

The following afternoon at one o'clock he announced that, in so far as was possible, everything had been attended to. Then he retired to the single room of the Kade House, leaving instructions that he was not to be disturbed under pain of death until ten minutes before the arrival of the train. Yet he made no attempt at taking a well-earned rest. The eulogy was still incomplete and he must frame it and memorize it.

How he accomplished the task with no more able guide than a volume on the diseases of cattle is a mystery that must ever remain unexplained, but, when at ten minutes to four he reappeared, his cheerful look and confident smile bespoke his success.

At the station a triple line of punchers obscured the track. They had been coming in since daybreak and fresh recruits arrived continuously from time to time. At the platform Lengthy sat proudly enthroned in the spring-wagon. That he was hopelessly stuck to the newly varnished seat seemed not in the least to disturb his equilibrium.

Behind him the Mexican orchestra rested, as you might say, upon its arms. A long line of carefully picketed ponies stretched away in their rear, showing that at least a part of the procession had been formed. Cherry surveyed these evidences of his lieutenant's industry with appreciation.

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For a wonder, the train was on time. The crowd gave a joyous whoop upon it's arrival and then subsided into an embarrassed silence, remembering too late that the affair was a funeral.

With due care and ceremony the coffin was lowered from the upper end of the combination coach. After it had been loaded into the wagon together with a number of floral designs, Lengthy gathered up his reins and made a mournful, clucking sound with his tongue—suitable for the occasion. As he did so, he felt a timid touch upon his arm.

Looking down he saw a woman who had alighted with the stream of visitors from the train. She was very old and very small. She was dressed all in black, and a huge, rusty sun-bonnet closely enveloped her snow-white hair. Clutching at Lengthy's sleeve she whispered a few faltering words.

With a loud, ripping tear, Lengthy sprang from his seat and hurried to the side of his leader. "Well, what is it?" asked Cherry.

"It's hell!" gasped Lengthy. "It's Fencedown's ma!"

Twenty minutes later Cherry emerged for a second time from the guest-room of the Kade House, and addressed the procession that was waiting impatiently outside. He looked harassed, and bitterly disappointed.

"You boys from the outfit come with me to Lopez's," said he abruptly. "The rest can stay behind."

He led the way in silence and it was not until he had gathered them all inside the saloon that he spoke again.

"It's Fencedown's mother all right," he began. "She's mighty old an' feeble, an' she's come all the way from Missouri to live with him. Says the mortgage came due on her place an' they run her out, an' she didn't have no place else to go. Course I had to tell her Fencedown was dead. There wasn't nothin' else to do. An' when she started cryin', so old an' lonesome an' feeble, I just couldn't help——"

He paused for a moment and burst forth excitedly:

"Hell, boys!" he cried; "I got a mother of my own an' I know how she'd feel."

"Sure," said Lengthy soothingly. "That's all right. But what'd you do?"

"I lied," answered Cherry resolutely. "I told her Fencedown was our marshal an' that he got killed yesterday capturin' the worst rustler in the State. I told her he was the best friend we had an' that the procession she seen at the depot was got up as a small token of our regard!"

He paused again and added:

"An' now if you all don't feel like playin' out my hand I'll just naturally pull out till things settle down."

There was a long silence before Lengthy voiced the sentiments of the crowd.

"It's pretty tough on Jubilee," said he, "but ladies first every time."

The funeral did not start for an hour, as there were several matters to be arranged. First the visitors had to be informed of the change and instructed as to what they were to do and say. Then the body of Fencedown had to be unearthed from where it had been hastily deposited in the stable behind Lopez's Saloon. After it had been properly laid out, the old lady was allowed to view it. Her grief was so terrible to see that, at a word from her, the punchers were glad to step outside and leave her with her dead.

It was only with the greatest difficulty that Cherry was finally induced to reenter the room and to beg the heartbroken mother that they might be allowed to continue with the apotheosizing of her son. This he succeeded in doing only after he had expressed the deep desire of his fellow mourners to prove their appreciation of their departed marshal.

That the affair was a success, despite the change of principals, was admitted by every one. In the lead drove Lengthy, carefully protecting his inert passenger from the ruts and roughness of the road. Behind him the Mexican orchestra savagely attacked the one march of their slender repertoire. It was a weird blending of "Dixie" and "Hiawatha" —a combination scarce appropriate—but, as they were all of them hopelessly drunk upon their advance pay, they performed it with a fitting slowness and lugubrity.

In their wake Cherry proudly supported the chief mourner in a surrey especially imported from the Circle K. He was followed by the outfit heavily banded with crape, and each of them carrying a floral design. The invited guests brought up the rear, interested and mellow and as willing to weep for the lately despised Fencedown as for any other man.

The services at the grave were most impressive. True, a few unlooked-for incidents may have marred the smoothness of

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the whole, but, if these were noticed, no one was impolite enough to mention them.

What mattered it that the coffin was found to be firmly imbedded in the newly varnished bottom of the wagon? That in extracting it Lengthy burst for a moment into a murmur of subdued profanity? Five minutes later he performed his part of the program with a dignity and solemnity worthy of a bishop. What mattered it that Cherry referred continuously to the deceased Fencedown as Jubilee? His eulogy was a masterpiece—his repeated references to the mother's white hair brought floods of tears.

Indeed, so great was his eloquence, so unanimous was the sympathy, that, after it was all over, a special deputation took the old lady aside and begged that she would carry out her previous determination of casting her lot with theirs. Thus, they argued, would the memory of her noble son be kept forever green in the minds of every one.

This, however, the old lady refused to do. She was grateful to them, she said, more grateful than they would ever know. In no other way could she have been better consoled for her loss than by the love and gratitude that they had shown her boy. But she could not stay with them.

Each fresh sight of her loved one's daily haunts would be a new pang to her, and the wound would never heal. There was still a married niece in Iowa and she would go to her. She had enough left to take her to Beaumont that night, and she would trust to Providence for the rest of the journey.

Of course there was a collection. Kade himself, the proprietor of the Circle K, started it, and it came to $500. The old lady received it in a species of dumb amazement, staring at the money with frightened eyes from the depth of her cavernous sun-bonnet.

They escorted her to the train that night and fired a salute upon her departure that well-nigh scared the passengers to death.

After the last faint gleam of the rear light had disappeared in the darkness, Cherry turned away with a sigh of satisfaction.

"Well, I reckon we done the thing up just about right," he began proudly, when he paused, struck by a sudden thought.

"If no one ain't got any objections, suppose we go plant poor old Jubilee?" he suggested in an altered tone.

The following afternoon Cherry rode over to Kade at train-time to see if anything had been heard of Fencedown's partner along the line. The fugitive had been gone forty-eight hours now and it was more than probable that he had put in at some obscure spot for food and water.

The mystery was, however, unsolved. The trainmen had been careful to question at each station and there was not the slightest suspicion of the rustler's whereabouts.

Long after the train had gone and the idlers had dispersed from the depot, Cherry sat alone upon the platform studying the problem of the escape. While he was doing so the agent came out of his office, handed him a letter and then departed.

The letter was long and thin, and was addressed in a vaguely familiar hand. It had been written at the Crosby House in Beaumont and, from the postmark, had been mailed that morning on the train. It ran:

DEAR CHERRY:

I hate to tell you, but it's too good to keep. Also, for your peace of mind, I want to let you know how it was done. I knew we were bound to get caught before long and so had everything arrangd.

As soon as I got rid of Fencedown—which was my only fear—I went to the shack, made up, and got into my dress and sun-bonnet. I passed you on the road just outside of town.

I walked down the track to the first station below, hid in the ditch on the off side, and waited for the train. When it came in I crossed over the platform to the depot, and they all thought I had just arrived.

I was figuring on lighting out for Beaumont when the train came back, but, when I found out how well my disguise was working and heard about Jubilee's funeral, I thought I'd lay over and take a chance. You see, Fencedown carried all our money in his belt and it was worth risking to get the roll. As his real name was Jim they couldn't expect me to know who they were talking about. I will add that he told me once his mother had died the day he was born.

Well, you know the rest. All I can say is that I want to thank you again for the extra five hundred, and for the royal send-off you gave my pal. Also for your appreciation of my skill. I have had some success in the past in female parts, but nothing like that before.

Once more thanking you, and with kindest regards to my friends both in Kade and at the Circle K, believe me, KINKY, *alias* FENCEDOWN'S MA.

P. S. In the event of your wanting to deliver another eulogy on the mother's white hair, there is plenty more where mine came from. You'll find it on that spavined roan of mine.

Cherry read the letter quickly and delivered a short, forcible oath. After he had read it a second time, he glanced cautiously about him, and then tore it into bits.

The agent watched him, taking note of his deep flush of shame.

"Sho'," he observed as the foreman turned away. "Damned if I don't b'leeve Cherry's got a gal!"

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PEARLS

by H·F·Prevost Battersby

THE night seemed of solid blue; blue at arm's length of one's eyes. There was no canopy of sky, but a liquid wash of air that swept softly among the stars.

South and east, across the lagoon, the mountain made a black angle in the powdered heaven, and the stars along its lower slopes blinked like fluttered eyes, as the heads of the cocoa palms swished to and fro in the Trade.

Far out, near the jaws of the pass, the riding light of Severn's schooner rocked with the pulse which throbs forever through the Pacific seas: but the hill held the wind in its skirts, and left the water like a glassy pool of sapphire ingrained with gold.

On the schooner's deck was Severn himself, lying along the counter, with shoulders propped against a bale, staring over the breathing water towards the shore. He shifted his position from time to time uneasily, as one who would make no terms with sleep. At each splash in the glimmering sea he turned his head, alert to every sound undrowned in the dull thunder of the reef.

From the beach the German trade house still showed a lighted window, and eastward, but high above it, a pane of orange gleamed in the blackness of the hill. The rest of Falea was asleep.

Severn, guessing midnight from the slow procession of the stars, grew ever more suspicious of such late hours. He had meager ground, as he told himself repeatedly, for his misgivings; but those to whom fortune is suddenly prodigal ask only the airiest foundation for their fears.

He rose and went forward to make sure all lights were out below, and in the starlight looked an even finer figure than his six feet made him. Lowering the mast head light, he trimmed it with his fingers, his face leaping yellow out of the darkness; a face whose deep-cut features had an air of breeding, rough with sea travel as they were. As he rehoisted the lantern, the window on the beach went black like a blown candle, and the trade house was blotted out of the night.

Guydermann was gone—where?

Severn, leaning against the foremast, watched the dark space where the light had been with unwinking lids; but not a chink betrayed a hidden lamp, and his eyes traveled up again to that glowing pane upon the hill, the last uncaptured loophole in the land of sleep.

Was it Maclure, or Maclure's daughter, he wondered, behind its curtain? The sly, raspy Scotsman, hatching some misbegotten deviltry against his guest of that afternoon—Falea had the worst of reputations—

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or Naura with those island eyes of hers, and the red flower in her black hair, Naura, fair-skinned as an English girl, but straight and clean-limbed as an Amazon, thinking over her marriage—her consignment, on the morrow to that oily lump of German obscenity in the trade house on the beach?

Suddenly, as if to confront his thought, the dull square of orange turned with a snap to lemon yellow; and the change, though near two miles away, made Severn start. He fetched his glass from the deck-house, and saw that the curtain had been drawn aside, and that a dark figure stood across the space of light. Was it Maclure searching the lagoon for the signal of some planned attack?

Then, cursing himself for a suspicious fool, he tightened the leaf about a *sului*, and lit it; but his hand shook. He stood there, smoking, for half an hour. The figure left the window, and returned to it twice; then the light went out.

Severn, who had been impatiently awaiting the event, felt, on its accomplishment, a sudden access of suspicion. He stared for some time longer at the black outline of the land; then he turned, lowered his riding lamp again, opened, and blew it out.

"If they want me they'll have to find me," he muttered as he closed the glass. At last, tired of standing and staring, he went aft and lay down.

A school of turtle startled him with a sudden gurgle which went by under the stern, dragging the grains of starlight into a thorny entanglement of gold. But the sea smoothed out its creases, and the stars trembled again within its depths like sinking sequins, while the silence smothered, as if with the whole weight of heaven, the moaning thresh along the shore.

Twelve years earlier, Severn was leaving school for Cambridge. He was the best young cricketer of his year, and his choice of a university had been guided by the weakness of its Rugby team. He had visions of four delightful seasons against the best men in England, and with the most charming company in the world. But, before they could be fulfilled, his father, a wealthy country parson, was almost beggared in covering with his own fortune the knavery of a co-trustee, and his son was offered a counting-house stool to replace his dream of fame with bruises.

The honest mettle of the boy's upbringing helped him to face the change cheerfully, and to give it fair trial; but clean-blooded muscle demanded something better worth the sinews of a man than the recording, all its life, of other people's incomes.

"It's not the grind I bar," he explained, after six months of it, to his father, "but that such a small part of one gets ground. I want to use up all I've got."

So he went, despite the suasion of his mother's tears, with the tide of adventure, then flowing, to a ranch in the Far West.

As a cowboy, however, he was little more successful than as a clerk. His labor delighted, his leisure disgusted, him. He loved the rough, the fighting side of life, but to the brutal he was always a stranger. His quiet hardihood and sledgehammer fists pulled him through his "tenderfoot" days, but he never acclimatized.

"I can't do the right thing out here," he wrote home, "without feeling a Heaven-forsaken cad. Yet on some points they've got the finest notions."

So he drifted on, out of its coarseness and fineness, into San Francisco; filled some very lowly offices in that city, and at last shipped for Honolulu, with the prospect of a berth as supercargo when he arrived there.

The berth fell through, but he obtained the promise of another on a boat trading in the Marshall and Gilbert groups; and so, as a dealer in copra and calico, he made acquaintance with the South Seas.

He shifted his papers, after three years, to one of Bomba's boats between Sydney and Samoa, and then, having saved money beyond what he sent home, went as mate and partner in a small concern to the Tuamotu and Marquesas.

It was while on this beat that Severn came first to Falea. Maclure, who had made his money in the old "gun" days, was just settled there, and Naura no more than a child. Her mother, a Manhikian, had inherited all the gentle loyalty of her people, and little Naura, who was born off Pleasant Island, from which she took her name, was as fair as a pearl-shell, and only showed her island blood in her hair and unfathomable eyes. Her mother died while she was young, but Maclure had not replaced her; and the child grew up alone with vague oppositions in her divided blood—a quaint, feverish mixture of shyness and passion.

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She always fled into the woods from the traders who invaded her father's house, and with Severn alone she was on friendly terms. Something in his frank, boyish bigness won her confidence, and she used to watch for the yards of his brig, and would sit listening to his talk on the veranda steps until he went aboard.

He fell into the way of bringing her little presents; but when, his venture coming to an end, he had sold out and bought a schooner on his own account, moving farther west, she saw no more of him for three years, until the morning when he had put into Falea for fresh food on his way to Tahiti, where he hoped to sell his ship with what shell there was in her, and take his way home on the first steamer with the fortune by which he was so strangely come.

Time and rough days had made on him but surface changes. Bronzed, bearded, broader than ever, he was still a boy. The devious ruts of trade had not wrenched the wagon-wheels of his honesty, but they had made him a cautious driver. The little schooner which he had bought for his own trade had been damned by every seaman in the port she sailed from; and, being a bit too crank for comfort in anything like a breeze, took all the handling her owner knew. He knew a good deal then; enough, his friends said, to know better; but he got his ship for a song, knocked a few inches off her spars, put some iron inside her, and made her stand up with the stiffest.

But the old boat was no more than waterproof, and, after fourteen months' tender sailing, Severn had to run a new stringer round her to strut out the ribs. Having to carry the last tie right across the transom, and knocking through a panel to fix it, he found a strong box concealed in the bilge, midway between the paneling and the strakes.

The lock was broken and the lid bore signs of having been pried, but inside it, sorted as to size and luster, were over a thousand pearls. Severn knew enough of the trade to reckon in loose figures the value of his find, and to know that the half of it would put him and his beyond want and work.

Then came the question: Whose were they? Clearly the vendors of the boat knew nothing of its treasure—had not so much as a suspicion. Its earlier owners had carried copra, and, dying at sea by some pestilence, the boat had been sold up to pay their debts. Still further in the past she had done a down-coast trade on the Australian ports, but the nature of it had been forgotten. It was certainly not in pearls.

Small wonder, then, that, by Severn's decision, both fitness and justice in the adventure made the treasure his own, nor that, within a few hours, the schooner was sailing close-hauled and fifteen points south of her proper course.

The condition of the boat provided for the crew an explanation of the change, and after seven days' sailing, with food running short, Falea was sighted.

Every man, long a wanderer, is nervous when he turns for home, and so much the more when he carries fortune in his pockets; and Severn, who, a dozen times in as many years, had smelt, unmoved, Death's breath upon his cheek, would not on any less compulsion than starvation have laid his boat inside that island lagoon.

It was not so much the ill-repute borne by the place, nor his more than dislike of Guydermann and Maclure, as the foreboding of some ill should anything interrupt this homing flight. But an empty larder left him no choice, and, three hours after sunrise, the schooner leaped into still water through a gullet of foam.

He breakfasted with Guydermann, and the fat German, with lips even looser than their wont, proposed a toast to connubial bliss.

"You going to marry?" asked Severn.

The other leered.

"Who?"

The trader cocked his eye at the hill.

"Naura?"

He nodded.

"The devil!" said Severn slowly.

"When?"

"Do-morrow, my yong frent," gurgled the other oilily. "You kom joost de dime."

With a rich disgust for so unnatural a union Severn climbed the hill that afternoon.

He had met Maclure and his daughter on the beach that morning, but neither had mentioned the event. The girl had sprung at him with pathetic friendliness, as of some neglected pet, but warmth was so much part of her that it had not warned him of new troubles.

He found Naura alone, seated on the matting in the dark, cool room, looking listlessly at a heap of silk upon the floor beside her.

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She turned her head at his footstep, but did not rise.

"Well, child," he said gently, putting his hand on her shoulder, "what's this I hear? You're to be married to-morrow?"

She shuddered at his touch.

"Don't!" she said.

"Father?" he asked shortly.

She nodded.

"Not you?" he demanded.

Her head sank lower.

"Ugh!" she groaned, shivering.

He walked over to the veranda and looked out on the lagoon, where his schooner was being laden with taro and turtle from a little fleet of canoes.

He turned to beckon the girl, but she was there behind him. She had stolen over, as if to keep near him for comfort's sake. She read his eyes as he pointed to the vessel, but shook her head.

"They'd kill you," she said.

He feared to tell her how far from Falea lay his future and his safety; he could not risk the secret to Maclure's suspicions.

"I'm going straight to Tahiti," he said, smiling.

"Tahiti!" she whispered beneath her breath.

Five minutes later she was laughing, telling him of all that had befallen since she had seen him last.

In that time she had become a woman—a woman, but with a girl's lightness still in her splendid limbs. Severn noted the strange, indolent buoyancy which had come to her, as she went about the room making tea for him.

Then Maclure came in. He began at once to talk trade in his scrapy voice, eying Severn like a leopard crouched to spring. He asked the schooner's destination, having heard rumors on the beach.

"Tahiti," said the sailor.

"Made yo' fortune?" sniffed the other.

"Not yet, but the boat's about made out her time—coming to pieces."

"She don't look a wreck," said the trader suspiciously.

"She'll hold together till we get there, I dessay."

"Seems light enough for a home run. What's in her—pearls?"

"Ay, ten ton of them," laughed Severn, but he did not like it.

"Staying for Jock's wedding to-morrow?" went on the other with a leer.

"No, I'm not, Mr. Maclure," said the young man sharply.

"Fine fellow, Jock," chuckled the trader. "Naura's that set on him yo' can't say; ain't yo', Naury?"

The girl looked at him with a loathing terror. "He's a devil," she said very low.

"He knows that what's good's worth paying for," sneered her father horribly; "and, dev'l or no, he'll see some show for his money, you bet, miss—or he'll let yo' hear why."

Severn got up. He felt, if he stayed longer, he should pull the throat out of this beast, who could sell his daughter to a drunken satyr and jest at the bargain.

"Off at sun-up to-morrow, cap'n?" asked Maclure as he walked to the veranda.

"Early," replied the sailor cautiously.

Looking back, he saw Naura leaning among the green palms against a pillar of the balustrade, her head thrown back as if for air, the glazing look of one abandoned in her eyes.

"*To fa!*" he cried to her.

She made a sudden movement with her arm as if to stop him; then it dropped to her side.

Severn went down the steep footway to the shore, through the tangle of liana and the cleared patches of guava, with a tight hand upon his heart. But for those trays of glistening pellets out there upon the water he would, he knew, have shown a different pair of shoulders to this affair. True, the concern was none of his; men sold their daughters every day, and not in the South Seas only. One could not run a knife through every villainous barter in flesh and blood.

Still—Guydermann and that girl! The thing was so revolting that it seemed any man's business to make it his own.

Yet he did not. If the German had crossed his path at that moment he might possibly have knocked him on the head; but only in some gusty riot of justice, not of deliberate resolve. And the pearls had done it. The poor man of six months ago would have broken a lance somewhere, somehow, wisely or madly, at the infamy of the thing and in the woman's honor. But now! He was an outcast, a pauper, going back to the chance of greatness, the glamour of wealth. The fume of life was in his nostrils; he could not breathe in this cold air of risk and death.

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Yet, ere he reached the shore, the better part of him spoke. Might he not do with his treasure what he could not do because of it? He would go back and outbid Guydermann. Was Maclure likely to prefer his pledged credit to a higher price?

And Naura should have passage in his schooner to any port she pleased. She might return to her mother's people. At the thought he faced about and recommenced the climb, using the ropes of liana for clambering short cuts across the winding way.

Just as the house came into view, the hazard of his action leaped out at him like a tongue of flame. If his offer should arouse Maclure's suspicions, or put his whetted muzzle on the scent of pearls, the schooner rocking in the bay below would never leave Falea.

Still, there was the man before him; he must go on. He reached the veranda, and glanced past Maclure into the dusky room for a gleam of his daughter's dress; but Naura was gone.

"I'm back to make you an offer," he said forthwith to the trader. "You say the German down there"— he nodded at the beach —"knows the worth of what's good. Suppose I know it better?"

"Suppose yo' do?" said the other, eying him.

"Well, I'll go it. You've sold your daughter to that dog, more shame to you! I'll give you what he's offered, and half of it again."

"In shell?" sneered the Scotsman.

"In pearl," replied Severn steadily.

"You've come pretty speedy by a fortune, haven't yo', young man? I didn't hear nothing about stones when you was up here last."

"Every one doesn't wear his purse in his mouth," returned the sailor. "Say this infernal deal is off, and the girl free to go where she likes, and you may see them when it suits you."

"Yo' weren't thinking what she'd fetch in 'Frisco, by chance?" snarled the other.

"I was thinking a Britisher don't like to see his own blood sold to foreign scoundrels, even in these parts, Mr. Maclure!" cried Severn hotly.

"Yo' needn't bawl; she's not there to hear yo'," said the other derisively.

But she was, though, with the light partition of the room between them. Leaning against the wall, as though to draw through it the sound of his words, her palms spread out on the red boards and her bosom pressed so close against them that her body moved as it swelled and sank with deep-drawn excitement.

"I'm not speaking to her, but to you, sir!" replied the sailor. "I've made my offer and I stand to it; if she don't like it there's no more to be said."

"No, there ain't, young man," said Maclure slowly and malignantly; "and if you try to say it again anywhere about my dung-heap yo'll get yor answer inside of yo'. Hear?"

He turned on his heel as he said it, and went into the house: and Severn, seeing everything at an end, took the hill path, feeling none too safe, till he reached the thicker shelter of the scrub, from a bullet somewhere in his back.

His reflections, threading the intricate wood, were not reassuring. CertainlyMaclure might have been disclined to anger a man who could do him daily mischief, and from whom he might draw, in the course of trade, profits even more considerable than the price of his daughter. It was possible, too, that he found an infamous humor in polluting the girl's purity—which might often have reproached him—with the profligate caresses of the man upon the beach. But it seemed to Severn most likely that he was determined to wring from that source what gold he could, and to become possessed, as well, by some foul experiment, of whatever fortune the schooner might conceal. So, being back at nightfall on his boat, and having no white hand to help him, he sent the crew below, and, filling a couple of Winchesters and his revolver, hung a kris at his belt, and took his post on deck to see the night through.

It was a half-hour after the last light was out in Falea, and some while yet before the dawn, that Severn heard the faint, rhythmic splash of what he took to be a paddle, inshore, on his lee. It was so much the merest flicker of sound that, but for its regularity, he would have paid no attention: just the "schlloop" of a dipped blade, and then the "threep" of its dripping surface. It must have been far away to sound so thin, nor could Severn, leaning over the counter, note any moving darkness in that liquid gulf of stars.

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Instead, the blue vault above him and the blue depth beneath, flickering with gold, and divided only by a black thread of beach, so oppressed his senses with infinity that he seemed to swing in heaven with all the abyss of space about him. He withdrew his head for an instant, and closed his eyes.

With sight suspended, his ears achieved a finer discrimination. They decided against a paddle: the entry was too dull, the drip of water too tinkling; the source of sound must be thicker and swung high. Then, suddenly, after long staring into the night, Severn laid down his rifle gently on the deck, and smiled; loosed the kris in his belt, and leaned further over the counter. It was a swimmer that approached him.

His first misgiving sought the shape of this attack. Did Maclure think to catch him napping the easier thus than with a canoe, and was this fellow coming to cut the boat's cable or his throat? His second thought was sheer wonder that any man for any price could be found to face the lurking death in that mile of water.

The swimmer's strokes grew somewhat slower and more cautious. Severn could see the dark bead, where the head pushed along the water, with a streak of quivering phosphorescence to right and left. A little nearer, and the swing aloft of the arm made a smoky whiteness above the swimmer, and the drops flung off it fell here and there about him like luminous pearls. It was difficult to judge in the darkness, but the swimmer's style seemed to Severn not native to the place; the body was not lifted—the lower arm lay always out of sight.

Then, suddenly, the strokes ceased. No doubt the oncomer was trying to pick out the boat's whereabouts by the black spaces of her masts against the sky. Severn shrank even closer to the gunwale, gripped the heavy kris, and measured with his eye the depth the blade woud swing. He meant to strike between the collar-bone and the neck.

He had lost sight of the floating head, but the smoky nimbus clung round it again when it moved. It was coming towards him. He could see the arm now; strangely white for an islander's, but that might be from the nebulous spray. Again the strokes ceased, and the swimmer, close under the quarter, turned and flung back a dripping head.

The pale light on the water touched the face, and went, leaving darkness and the stars; but the knife had slipped from Severn's hand, his head stretched out over the stern with a hoarse whisper, as though the world might hear:

"Naura!"

"*Aue!*" came the answer with a frightened sigh; "is it you?"

The next instant she was under him, and, leaning over the counter, he slipped his arms beneath hers to lift her out of the sea. But the strain was beyond his strength, and, for the moment, faint with exertion and excitement, she hung there, breathing hard, her face fallen against his. Then she got her hands upon the low gunwale, and he drew her on the deck.

"Child, child!" he whispered brokenly, with the deadly risk of the thing damp upon him, "how dare you do it?"

Crouching on the deck beside him, her head bent, she reached out her hands and took his.

"You came back to my father," she said shyly.

"You heard, Naura?"

"Aye! you came back for me."

"To save you from that devil," he whispered.

"Only that?" she sighed.

To swim across the lagoon she had slipped off the skirt of fine *tapa* and the light blouse which she wore in a graceful compromise of fashions oversea, retaining only the long sleeveless smock of China silk which hung over them, and reached from a low square-cut neck, broidered with beetle wing, to below the knee. It clung now to her dripping figure like a film, and the glistening wing-sheaths upon it glittered greenly in the starlight as her breast rose and fell.

Her hair still held the scarlet mallows she had placed there to please him, and their dull, sweet odor drifted like the spicy trail of an island blown across the sea, mingled with the scent of wet silk and the salt fragrance of her skin.

"Only that?" she said again.

She shivered as she spoke, and stripping off his coat, he wrapped it round her shoulders and tied his scarf about her throat.

"Little one," he said, slipping an arm behind her, "I came back to take you anywhere you might choose. You've only to choose."

"Anywhere?" she whispered wistfully.

"Anywhere," he replied.

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Her head bent towards him, his hand tightened about the round, smooth muscles of her arm.

"Everywhere?" she breathed.

He drew her closer, and wrote his answer upon her cheek, and she who had only made love's acquaintance that afternoon took the touch of his lips as trustfully as an oath.

So they sat, he with eye and ear alert, for all his guarding arm and his kisses on her face; she with nestling fingers, her wet skin pressed against him in an ecstasy of abdication, and as oblivious to danger as the dead. Severn questioned as to her father, the discovery of her flight, the probable steps for her recapture, but he might as well have asked the air.

Then he took her down into his cabin, producing with apologies the few rolls of silks and stamped muslins which were left him of his trade. She laughed, and pushed him through the door; and in half-an-hour was again on deck, with a wonderfully wound bodice of flame-colored China silk under one of his own duck jackets, and a skirt of looped muslin over the mats of white parrot feathers she had stripped from the bed. Her feet were bare, but then her feet were lovely, and used to being seen.

He let her stay with him till he roused the crew, and then sent her below, pledging her to remain there till they were in the open sea. The wind had died at midnight, but it was breathing now, and might freshen before the dawn. On the chance of its holding hung, as Severn knew, the lives of all on board.

The watch stumbled sleepily on deck, and he hailed them aft, and gave them his orders.

"We've to get out of this an hour hence," he concluded, "or we'll rot here till the last trump: so look slippery."

The dawn was pink now above the land, and the light of it pinched the eastern stars into points of silver. The mirror of the lagoon had lost them ere the first cat's-paw put a smear of rose over the blue, and above its purpled roughness the trees grew green again upon the hill. The gray pigeon's call came hoarse across the water, and a flight of frigate birds rose screaming near the shore to flee on their thin wings seaward over the reef.

The schooner's mainsail and jib were set, the latter fluttering in the light draft of air.

"Heave short!" cried Severn, and the cable began to come aboard. Then as the anchor was hove, the sky filled suddenly with the beating brilliance of the sun.

The schooner's head paid off, the staysail was run up, the foresail set, and she stood slowly out into the lagoon with a clapping ripple at the bow. As she luffed to lay her course the wind fell, and for an anxious hour her sails flapped idly above their white reflections while the world woke up on the land around her.

Figures began to show in the darkness of the house doors, and long black shadows leaped to their feet as they stepped out into the sun. Very leisurely they moved about, those morning people; and if any cast an eye at the schooner, it showed no keener interest than curiosity.

So for an hour; but presently, at a point beneath the hill, man met man till there was a dark knot of them. Then, like feathers at a puff, the little figures parted, running hither and thither.

Severn, his back against the wheel, turned a grim glance to his armory, and found Naura at his side. Her eyes met his frown of reproach.

"I couldn't," she pleaded.

His eyes went back to the beach.

"He knows?"

Naura nodded.

"Will you go back?" he questioned.

Her head shook vigorously.

"Die here!" she said.

A canoe was filling on the beach. A mile away, on that clear morning, one could hear the ring of gun-barrels handed aboard. As it pushed off, the surface of the lagoon was scratched by the wind, the schooner lurched indolently to port, and nodded forward a pace or two through the water.

For another instant she hung, but the purple deepened upon the bay, and with a dip of her peaks, like a dallying woman, and a dancing feather of spray at her forefoot, she stood on towards the pass; the canoe, hard driven, frothing vainly after her.

With one last coquettish impulse, as she jibed to clear the reef, she stood erect to shake her shivering canvas, like a laugh, at her pursuers; but then the white sails filled, the water shrilled about her bows, and flying down the silver way, she broke, plumed with spray, like an escaping bird through its thunderous foam, into the open splendor of the sea.

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LION HUNTS *in* EAST AFRICA

By Alfred Jordan

IF YOU find your business too monotonous, try cattle trading in East Africa. It is one of the liveliest of occupations. Unfriendly savages are likely to shoot poisoned arrows at you and lions and leopards haunt your trail. There are few dull days, and you make money. As to the commercial side, you can buy cows in the farming section along the Uganda Railway for from ten to fifteen dollars each and, after driving the animals across the country to the villages of the natives, you can trade a cow for twenty-five fine sheep, each of which is worth from two to three dollars in the civilized settlements. You have realized a profit of about one hundred per cent. and have had adventure.

With about fifty head of good cattle, some donkeys and twenty porters, I started on a *trek* to the Masai tribe. After a rather toilsome trip over the rolling hills and through the bush of Southern Guesherno we came at last to the Amala River. Here, for the greater protection of the cattle and also for a headquarters while trading with the Masai, I determined to establish a permanent camp. On a gentle slope a little way up from the clear waters of the Amala I directed the building of a house of grass, wood and mud for myself and a kitchen and four huts for the porters. For the cattle we constructed a *boma* or stockade of thorn trees. The donkeys we hobbled in front of my house. Less than a quarter of a mile away was the edge of a forest, which, I soon discovered, was a favorite haunt of lions.

That night when all seemed snug and peaceful there arose a great commotion among the donkeys outside my door. The noise of their frightened *hee-haws* was almost instantly reenforced by yells. In a few seconds I was outside. The night was peculiarly black. I could see nothing, but suddenly a body bumped against mine and I toppled over backward. Jumping to my feet again, I made out the dark forms of the donkeys. They had pulled up their stakes and were stampeding. Over in the *boma* I heard the poundings of many hoofs and the sounds of breaking and crashing. Some of my men now ran up and told me that lions had stolen up to the *boma* on the far side, that the cattle had broken through the thorn saplings in their fright and, with the lions behind them, were running into the forest. By this time I could hear the deep purring of the lions myself.

Shouting to my carriers and Lumbwa spearmen to light fire-brands, I ran into the house, seized my largest rifle, a .577 express, a shotgun, and a .303 magazine rifle. Thrusting the latter two into the hands of gun-bearers and calling to everybody to come on, I stumbled over the uneven ground toward the mass of blackness which marked the forest. Big drops of rain began to fall; in a moment there was a furious downpour, accompanied by terrific thunder and flashes of lightning which lit up the forest strangely. Our fire-brands flickered and went out. Still we pushed on, picking our steps in the almost incessant illumination of the lightning.

In a little while we came upon a group of sheep. They were huddled together, shaking with fright. I ordered some of the men to try to drive them slowly back to camp, but when this was attempted we found that the creatures were too terrified to move. It was necessary to carry them back one by one. For this work my Kaverondo por-

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ters proved of little use; they were about as frightened as the sheep. The Lumbwa spearmen, however, did good service and finally we had all the animals once more in the broken *boma*. Nothing further could be done that night and, with my clothes soaked from the rain, I went back to the house.

At dawn I aroused my men and again we went into the forest. There was no difficulty in following the course my animals had taken in their flight. It was marked by many broken bushes. In a few moments we found another group of huddled sheep. I started them, in charge of Kaverondos, back to camp, while I and the spearmen went on after the cattle. After a tramp of about a mile through the dripping underbrush we came upon the tracks of lions. The indications were that at least a dozen beasts had pursued my live-stock.

At last the sun came out and I found an open place, where I rested and dried my clothes. The spearmen had been sent in various directions to look for lions, with orders that when they saw any of the beasts they were to whistle. I soon heard this signal and ran in the direction from which it came, with my rifle ready for a lion. But I saw only a grinning spearman who was pointing down the slope to a grassy place, where I perceived some animals grazing. These were zebra, and among them were my donkeys, feeding peacefully. Knowing that we must be careful not to scare the zebras, because in this event the donkeys would be likely to gallop off with them, I directed some of the spearmen to creep up quietly, and sent another party around in front to try to head the donkeys off. When the spearmen drew near, the heads of the zebra came up suddenly from the grass and, with their tails in the air, the animals scampered off. The donkeys were starting after them, but strange to say, they turned suddenly when they saw the men, and came trotting in our direction as if relieved at finding human protection once more.

In casting my eyes over the sweeping landscape for the missing cattle I happened to see some vultures circling slowly over a distant hill. Being anxious to find out what the birds were feeding upon, I sent two of my best runners toward them and followed cautiously myself, taking care to keep out of sight as much as possible, because vultures, when they see a man, will mislead him by soaring away and swooping down in another place. The only certain method of locating the vulture's real feeding-spot is to conceal one's self when close enough to make accurate observations, and there to take note of the exact vicinity over which the birds are hovering. I did this and then proceeded rapidly. On my way I met the two runners, who came toward me leaping with joy. This meant, I thought, that all the cattle were safe, but instead of this, the runners told me that they had seen five lions feeding on a big ox.

I followed them and in a few moments, just after we had rounded a hillside, the men pointed to the lions. They were down the hill a little way, where the scrub was thin, gorging themselves on one of my best animals. Fearing that the cartridges in the rifles might be damp, I changed them as we moved forward slowly. When we were about a hundred yards from the feeding beasts I ordered my companions to stop where they were while I crept on to a bush just ahead. I took with me my .577 express, which was rather careless of me, for the reason that it is always wise to keep the heaviest gun in reserve for the emergency of a charge, when, unless you kill with a single shot, you are likely to be done for.

Crouching behind the bush, I took careful aim at a big lioness and dropped her with a bullet in the spine. In a few seconds I fired again and another lioness rolled on her back. I had picked out the lionesses first because females are always the more dangerous at close quarters. The three lions lifted their heads from the meat and peered in my direction, apparently undecided whether to charge or to clear away in the scrub. Throwing out the empty shells and reloading, I settled this question for them by quick shots which caused two of them to drop. My gunbearer had run up, and, snatching from him the .303 rifle, I hit the fifth lion in the stomach. He jumped into the bush, snarling furiously.

Following cautiously with my .303 and seeing no sign of him, I went on more boldly. A heavy grunt close behind startled me. I turned quickly; the lion was romping in my direction! I fired and struck him. For an instant he hesitated, then came on again. Once more I fired; again he paused, but only for an instant. I let him have another shot and noticed as he advanced that he was dragging his front paw. Each time he had

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paused I had retreated a few feet, and still had room in which to use my rifle. I fired again, and the beast made a desperate rush. I was becoming angry at him. Did he have nine lives? I hoped not, because I had only one charge left.

Realizing the vital importance of not wasting this in a futile shot, I tried to dodge around a big ant-hill. But with limping bounds the beast drew nearer. All too vividly I could see his gleaming teeth and the fury in his eyes. When he was so close that I could almost have struck with my gun, I steadied myself for my final shot. It was now or never. The beast's big head and chest were so near that I could hardly miss, and when I pulled the trigger he reared on his hind legs and fell backwards, dead at last.

Being somewhat out of breath, I rested for a few moments and then went back to where one of the lionesses was giving vent to mournful roars. I quickly put her out of her misery and then ordered some of my boys to skin her. All were fine lions; two were tawny, and the one which so nearly ended me had a beautiful black mane. After inspecting the skins with considerable satisfaction we again took up the search for the missing cattle. In a little while we came upon the remains of a young ox upon which a lion had been feeding. I saw his tracks, but could not find the lion himself. Not until the sun was low did I give up the cattle hunt. I was much discouraged, having lost forty head of cattle.

My depression, however, lasted only until the next forenoon. At daybreak I had sent out some spearsmen to take a last look for the cattle, and in about five hours they returned in triumph with all but six. It was apparent that only the lions I had killed had made the attack upon the live-stock. This was a little odd, for there were many lions in the forest and surrounding country.

Their abundance was brought strongly to my attention three or four days afterward when I went out for meat one morning. Not intending to shoot much, I had taken only five rounds of ammunition. After killing a hartebeest and another antelope, which I left with three of my boys to skin, I started back to camp with three cartridges. I had a mount that morning, a good pony, and was riding carelessly along a hillside dotted here and there with patches of scrub and bushes, when the strong odor of a lion suddenly assailed my nostrils. I jumped from my pony and snatched the rifle from my gun-bearer. A few feet ahead was a clump of bushes. Leaving the pony with the gun-bearer, I advanced cautiously, making a little detour to get a good view of the other side of the bush without approaching too close to it. Around the edge of the thin foliage I saw a large lioness beating the ground softly with her tail and crouching for a spring.

I knew that she could reach me in two jumps and that there was no time to lose. Forgetting in my haste that there was a good cartridge in my rifle, I lifted the bolt and pulled it back. A good cartridge flew out, leaving me with only two charges. Aiming carefully, I fired and hit the lioness in the shoulder. She fell over on one side but, recovering herself, made a limping bound toward the shelter of another bush. As far as she was concerned, I was safe, but the echo of my shot had not died away before her mate, a fine lion with a long mane, suddenly came out from a piece of scrub about a hundred yards away and gazed at me. I fired my last cartridge at him and missed.

The lion did not move. We stared at each other for a moment. Out of the corner of my eye I happened to catch a glimpse of a tawny head in another bush. I glanced about now, and was astonished to see that lions were looking out from numerous clumps of scrub.

Being defenseless against their powerful teeth and paws, I realized that the best thing to do was to remain as quiet as possible. So I sat down on the grass and counted the animals. Including cubs, there were just twenty of them. I never wanted a few cartridges so much in my life, but since I had none I returned to where my gun-bearer was holding the pony, and circling around the scrub, went back to camp. All night I could hear the lions lifting up their voices in deep grunts and dismal roars.

Early in the morning, accompanied by my gun-bearer and a few of the boys, I went to the scrub in which the wounded lioness had sought refuge. Here the grass was much trampled and the bushes broken, indicating that all the lions had lain around the lioness in the night. The tracks also indicated that at least half a dozen had accompanied her to the spring to drink. This was the same spring from which my boys ob-

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tained water for the camp. We returned toward it, following the lions' spoor, which told me that the wounded female had been surrounded by the others.

Seeing nothing of the lioness at the spring, we followed their tracks for about three miles, when, a little ahead of me, I saw the lioness licking her wound. She had not observed me yet. To obtain a good shot, I shouted to her. She lifted her head and I dropped her with a bullet through her brain. At this instant a lion jumped into view. I took a flying shot at him and clipped off about two feet of his tail as he went bounding away in the scrub.

He was undoubtedly the mate of the dead lioness and had suffered a serious loss, because a lion and lioness usually stalk game together, and the lioness does most of the work. The mate alarms the antelope and other animals with loud roars, thus starting them on a stampede. The lioness crouches in their probable path and when they come rushing along leaps upon the back of the nearest animal, puts a paw around the neck and breaks it. Because lionesses almost always do the killing they spring more quickly than do their male companions and are more dangerous in an encounter.

Not long after this experience I went out one morning to shoot a zebra or two for meat. Picking out a big one, I fired, but he had begun to run for the bush and I did no better than to hit him in the flank. He continued on his way and I shouted to one of the two boys who accompanied me to follow him, while I dropped another zebra. Intent upon my own work, I was startled after a little interval by hearing loud cries. "*Bwana, Bwana, lewaro!*" My runner was calling my own name, telling me that he had come upon a lion. I followed the sound of his voice swiftly, and in a moment saw among the trees the zebra I had shot, prostrate now, with two lions beginning to feed upon its body. One of them, a female, was licking the blood from the zebra's flank where my bullet had made the wound.

My boy evidently desired to impress me with his courage, for when he saw me he advanced toward the lioness with his spear, foolishly trying to drive her off. She turned upon him with a snarl, leaped and bore him to the ground. Her big teeth were tearing away the flesh on his chest and shoulders when I ran up, placed the barrel of my rifle against her head and fired. She rolled over, and I dragged my runner out from beneath her legs. The mate of the lioness had disappeared.

My man was badly lacerated. I got him on my shoulder and, after staggering along with him for a quarter of a mile, laid him down under a tree and sent the other boy back to camp for aid. When we got him in I bathed his wounds with a strong solution of permanganate of potassium, bound them up as well as possible, and laid him on an army cot. The wound finally healed, but the shoulder tendons had been so torn that the boy never fully recovered the use of his right arm.

Lions continued to harass my cattle. One afternoon a boy whom I had directed to take some cows to graze came to my tent with the cheerful information that lions had got the cattle. At once I organized a party and tracked the live-stock sixteen miles down the Magor River. They had traveled rapidly, evidently urged onward by a frenzy of fear. The tracks were plain enough by daylight, but we lost them in the darkness. I called a halt, had the boys build a big fire and prepared to sleep. Every few minutes we would hear the roar or deep grunt of a prowling lion. Suddenly just as I was about to roll myself in my blanket, I was startled by a great crashing in the underbrush.

The sound of breaking branches and the snapping of small trees rapidly grew louder. It was evident that the animals, whatever they were, were making directly for our camping-place. Seizing my rifle and shouting to the boys to be ready, I peered anxiously into the darkness beyond the firelight. I expected to be confronted by the lowered horns of rhino, and was astonished when, instead of these, the heads of my own cattle came into view. They had been attracted by the fire. Some instinct told them that here was safety from their enemies of the forest.

A number of the boys ran out to round them up. We drove them to a level grassy place within reach of the firelight and I arranged for the boys to guard them in three watches until the sun came up. The cattle sank wearily on the grass, exhausted by their flight. When I counted them I found that only two were missing. We drove them back to camp that day and I indulged in no unnecessary delays in exchanging them for sheep and getting out of this country of too many lions.

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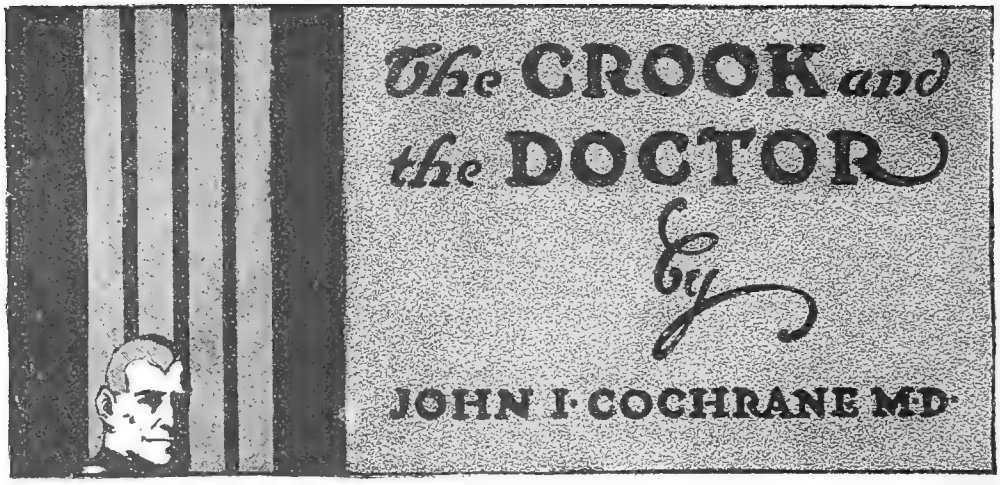

CHAPTER I

THE UNDERTAKING

"CORBIN, do yo' want my place at the Penitentiary?" Mac dropped limply into my big chair.

"You ought to know," said I. "You've had a few days of it. But what's up?"

Mac rolled his quid and spat gloomily into the grate.

"I've got a chance to go on the staff at the Post Clinic," he rumbled in his deep bass. "But I'm not goin' to leave unless yo' will take my place at the Pen." As he glowered at the fire, he looked like a man just off a sick-bed.

"What have you been doing all this week, Mac? I had just decided to look you up to-night, to see if you were still living. What have they done to you? You look down and out."

"I feel right much that way. Theah's hell to pay oveh theah, Corbin," he growled.

"Tell me all about it."

"I don't know all about it. But this is some of it. They've only had a regular prison doctoh oveh theah fo' about a yeah, an' it didn't work well. Duffield, the first man on the job, did what he saw 'em all doin'—grafted. He sold places in hospital to any prisoner that could pay enough. He sold the drugs furnished by the Depahtment and stuck to the money, an' mo' to the same tune. Of co'se the graftin' was to be expected, but the sick men lay in their cells an' made a lot of trouble fo' the screws.* So he got both the crooks an' screws down on him, somebody raised a holleh, an' Brer Duffield left in the night, or he'd be wearin' stripes himself a whole lot. Then two other men tried the place. Didn't stay three days. An' when I appeared to 'em a few days ago, they didn't do a thing to *me!*"

"In what way?" I interposed.

"Every way!" said Mac fervently. "The crooks have about as much use fo' a doctoh as the devil has fo' skates. Besides, one of the prisonehs, the 'drug ohderly,' has been workin' the hospital graft an' has all the keepers backin' him. I neveh *did* find out how he gets his pull."

"*But*," I objected, "it seems to me that anybody who would run a straight, honest service could down that crowd—unless, of course, some of the higher powers come in for a rake-off."

"They don't. So that was just what I tried; an' I thought I was goin' to land. But just as I thought I was gettin' on to my job I ran afoul anotheh snag. The Head Matron has *her* little ol' graft on the women's side an' I stepped on its tail befo' eveh I saw it. Yo' can see my finish—yo' know I can't fight a lady."

"So you want me to do it!" said I crisply. "Thank you, but I'm getting a pretty good service at the City Hospital."

"Now yo' listen to me, Corbin. This is a heap betteh sehvice an' yo are quite somebody oveh theah, if you can make it go. Yo' live in, an' are well cared fo'. It'll give

*Keepers.

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yo' lots of time to prepare fo' yo' Ahmy exams. The Head Matron is away now fo' a week. An' if yo' can do that damned Dutchman—the drug ohderly—yo' can make good!" Mac was solemnly impressive. His pose was ever that of one who had drunk the lees and had nothing left to feel. But now he showed minute signs which from long acquaintance I knew to mean embarrassment. "Besides," he began again, "the's a whole lot of unnecessary sufferin' oveh theah an' then—Damn it all, Corbin, I hate to feel like a quitteh! I want the Post Clinic sehvice; but, if yo' don't go to the Pen I don't go to the P. C. If yo' will carry the thing through I'll feel most as well's if I had done it myself!"

It was highest proof of his trust he was giving me—asking me to "make good" for him.

"When do I go on?" I asked suddenly, and a flush in Mac's hollow cheeks was better than thanks.

"Monday mawnin'," said he buoyantly.

"Then there's no time to spare," said I, reaching for pad and pencil. "You'd better give me what points you can, right now, for it may be your last chance, this being Saturday night."

"It sure will. I shall be right busy till Monday mawnin'," said he. "I've got to get the swap fixed up."

How he did it I never knew. With a trust as complete as his own, I left all that to him, at once proceeding to question him on my new duties and difficulties.

Some of the notes I took that night lie before me now, and bring back afresh scenes to defy the pen of Hugo, the brush of Hogarth. Only the urging of prejudiced friends, and no presumption on my part, is to blame for my making this rough attempt to set them before you. If the happenings of the days that followed are not pleasing I have no apology, no explanation—except that they happened in the year 190–, and I was not consulted. The note ran:

"Henry, drug orderly, runs hospital. Get rid of him or he'll knife you. Don't give him a chance to dope you. Almost got me." Then followed some cautions about the Head Matron, ending—"*Let her alone.* She is the devil." "Don't bother the Warden with questions; ask the Dep. (Deputy Warden). You can count on the Dep. at the start. Also Kinney."

For some time I didn't interrupt him. His every word was to the point, and I knew their importance. This was plainly no boy's game. When he paused I hurriedly ran over my notes.

"Almost *got* you? How's that, Mac? Did he try to poison you?"

"I never did know. I had a so' throat, an' started to fix a gargle. I was called away an' set the chlorate of potassium down in the window. When I came back an' finished fixin' the stuff somebody had put the cyanide bottle wheh I left the chlorate, both of 'em had lost theah labels, an' one gargle would have made me fit to plant. Co'se it couldn't be proved on anybody.

"I sure came mighty neah snuffin' out, an' if I had, it would have gone as an accident. It was a prisoneh prevented it——" And Mac seemed to reminisce, with a puzzled look on his tired face.

"How?" I jogged him up. "Who was it?"

"Fello' I never did see befo'. Kind o' queeah 'bout that. I had it all fixed an' just as I was goin' to take a face-full o' the stuff somebody says, quiet but mighty sharp, 'Bettah smell it!' An theah stood a man I neveh did see befo' or since.

"Riley, the hospital keepeh, said his name was Dan Wheeler. I recollect that because I asked Riley this mawnin' wheah he was—intendin' to thank him fo' headin me off—and Riley said: 'Betteh let Dan Wheeler alone.' By the way, Corbin, that Riley ain't half bad, fo' a screw. He will booze, an' goes on a drunk every Monday night, but he can help yo' a lot about the hospital if yo' handle him right."

"Remembeh, yo' all will have all the balance o' the screws an' all the crooks dead against yo' at the start. Then yo' are bound to get the head grafteh, the drug ohderly, out o' yo' way. Yo've just got it to do, o' yo' *neveh can* get *loe* yo' patients, o' give them a square sehvice." He stopped to look at his watch. "But I must go. So long! I surely am obliged to yo' fo' this!" And he departed, to be seen no more for days.

CHAPTER II

WITHIN PRISON WALLS

MONDAY morning as I lugged my bags up the graveled walk I looked curiously at the frowning front of the big gray, island prison. It seemed singularly dark and threatening.

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I rang a bell at the heavy central door. It opened and disclosed a grim, blue-coated keeper of severe and portly dignity.

"I'm the new Doctor," said I mildly. "Where'll I find the Deputy Warden?"

"First door to the right," in a tone of weary resignation. I passed on, feeling very small, to the open door indicated.

The Deputy Warden was dictating to a striped stenographer; two other convict clerks were writing at separate desks. The Dep. did not look up, but deliberately finished his letter. Meanwhile the two under clerks studied me with open curiosity, exchanged one glance, then bent their close-cropped heads again over their work. The Dep. looked like a Tenderloin police captain —not a bad sort, as men go. But he had long rubbed against the seamy side, which is also soiled. When he had finished dictating he wheeled in his swivel chair, pinned me with his official glare and barked:

"Well?"

Now, although I was predisposed to like the man and had been told he was friendly, I didn't like to be barked at. So I very deliberately and silently produced my card. It had borne the "Dr." only a few months and I was very conscious of the title. His deputyship was thereupon pleased to be jocular. "*Oho!* So *you're* the next victim, are you, Doc?"

"No."

"What? Not?" said he, laughing with instant appreciation. "Well, if that's the way you feel about it, perhaps you're not. Shake!" he said suddenly, rising and offering his hand.

He seemed to like the grip he got, and surveyed my six-foot-one with conditional approval.

"*But,*" he began again suddenly, with a keen glance at close range, "there's *nothing in it?*" It was a question; and still his manner left something to be desired. So again I shook my head slowly as I said:

"No. Guess again."

"Give it up."

"Well, I want the practise, and—" I judged he'd appreciate that part; so in a lower tone I finished: "I want to make good for Mac!"

If I had laid claim to humane or missionary motives the shot would have gone wild, but this seemed to strike him right.

"More power t' your elbow!" said he. "But it's a man's job, all right. Anything I can do for you?"

"I think not, right now. Thank you. Later I'll make life a burden to you." The clerks were writing still with impassive faces, but no word was missed.

"Any time. It's part of my job." Turning toward the door he shouted. "Joe!" A small Hebrew trusty popped in from the bell-boy bench in the hall.

"Joe is your boy, Doctor." The head clerk, an unusually fine looking fellow, here caught my eye significantly at this change from familiar "Doc." "Keep him busy if you can," the Dep. was saying. "You'll find him willing. And if he doesn't jump when you call, send him to me."

My room was right at the head of the long stairs leading up from the main hall. Opposite the door a large iron-barred window let in the morning sun and looked across the river. By the side of the window, at the head of a neat iron bed, a speaking-tube connected with the hospital.

After unpacking and putting the room to rights I dismissed Joe and sat down in the broad window-seat to collect my wits and to enjoy the Winter sunlight. I filled my pipe and as I looked for a place to scratch a match I saw lying on the cushion beside me a strip of paper. Some words were typewritten on the other side. I turned it over and read:

"Cough medicine." Verbum Sap. Burn this.

The first two words alone were in quotation. It was certain the paper was not in the window-seat when I entered the room, for my first move had been to try the cushions. It must have been given to Joe by somebody in the office. I lit my pipe, set fire to the paper and watched it burn. It was either a well-meant hint or a silly joke. Perhaps time would tell what it meant; I would bear the two words in mind.

As I recalled Mac's various warnings, the stillness began to seem oppressive. It became the quiet of stern repression—like the hush on a firing-line before battle. A sense of something coming, like nothing but the night-terror of childhood, grew strong and stronger until I felt I must go to meet it. The shriek of the speaking-tube whistle close to my ear brought me up standing with a jump.

"Hello! Doctor?"

"Yes."

"You're wanted in the hospital at once."

I found Joe in the lower hall and he

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piloted me out into the long corridor of the prison proper. The door was opened by a leonine old Irishman whose voice—"call it the" bull's bellow, the mule's warble:

"Are ye the Docther?" Holding out a huge paw.

"I am."

"Me name's Kinney—*Gwan ye little scut! Take the Docther up t' the hospital!*"

It was easy to see that Kinney's roughness was all outside. And I soon found that all the keepers spoke to their charges in an imitation of his rough roar. Lacking his big man's-heart, however, they only succeeded in insulting every man they addressed.

I did my best against the old fellow's crushing grip and fancied there was a twinkle of humorous sympathy in his clear blue eyes.

Riley, the day keeper, met me at the stairway door. He was a "good fellow" who couldn't refuse a drink—his nose and breath spoke for the past and present—and he was just then in the foxy stage. Doubtless he too saw before him "the next victim." He saluted as I entered, winked his off eye at one of the striped nurses and turned himself loose:

"Good morning, Doctor! Sorry to disturb you, Doctor, before sick-line. But this man wouldn't be quiet till I sent for you. And——"

"Where is the patient?" I interrupted coolly, stepping past him and looking down the long ward. Every man, bed-case, convalescent, grafter and attendant, was listening.

"Patient, Doctor? Yes, Doctor! Certainly, Doctor! This way, Doctor!" With suddenly obsequious haste he jumped past me and waddled down the aisle between the beds, waving his arms right and left, as if clearing a passage through a crowd.

The patient was only a boy. His face, now drawn with pain, was neither hard nor vicious; his eyes appealed for tenderness, for relief, yet were filled with a hopeless certainty of suffering and cruelty. What else could he, a crook, expect? It required only one whispered question and one light exploratory pressure of the hand to make sure that he had acute appendicitis. I was especially careful not to cause any pain, to complete the examination very thoroughly and gently, and I must have overdone it a bit, for his eyes not only lost their dreary hopelessness and filled with a dog-like gratitude but they were soon swimming. His lips began to tremble and his voice broke.

So I put the thermometer in his mouth, took his wrist in one hand and my watch in the other. Then there followed that two minutes of quiet which is so soothing and so favorable to a suggestive mood on the part of the patient.

I turned to the "trusty" nurses: "Fill a large icebag half full of cracked ice the size of a walnut, please." Then, turning to Riley: "Where is the drug orderly?"

Now Riley was Irish (had you guessed it?) and I learned later that he had had appendicitis himself. Anyhow, his tone was altered as he answered.

"Drug orderly? Yes, sir." Then turned and yelled loudly, "Henry! Here!" As is the custom of all good "screws."

A soggy, thick-necked figure, standing before the drug-cabinet at the end of the ward, picked up a paper pad and sauntered slowly toward us. His face was of a brutal, German type—retreating head, wide nostrils, prognathic mouth and jaw—and wore a beastly, insolent smirk. He dodged my eye and cast a look of vicious menace at the sick boy, who turned his white face toward me with fearful pleading. It was hard to believe that all the sick men in the prison had for months been at the mercy of this repulsive animal.

While I was giving him the prescription his small, shifty eyes wandered to the attendants. They had filled the ice-bag and were now carefully turning down the bedclothes. Suddenly the German interrupted me by a snarling oath. Seizing the ice-bag with one hand and stripping down the covers with the other, he was about to jam the bag hard down on the naked, flinching body of the patient, when I wrenched it from him with enough force to throw him prone, almost across the boy's body. But I was on the right side of the bed with every muscle tense and itching from this wanton brutality. As he pitched forward I caught his outstretched arm with a backward twist that turned him half round and he fell against Riley with a scream of pain.

"Now see here!" I said, holding in with difficulty. "I'll try to run this case! You get that medicine—get it right *now!*—and *bring the bottles here!*" He went, rubbing his shoulder and muttering under his breath.

But as I turned back toward the patient, still hot with disgust, my glance was ar-

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rested with a shock which drove everything from my mind by the figure of a man standing at the foot of the bed! The greenish-amber eyes gave me a shiver such as I once felt when facing a roused rattler. They glowed with a dull fire beneath straight heavy brows. The features were sharply cut, the mouth mercilessly grim, the chin deep-cleft and massive. For a moment I seemed paralyzed. Then, as a sword from a deep thrust, the eyes were withdrawn from mine; and with the lithe, noiseless step of a panther he moved away.

Even in the ugly prison stripes it was a figure to command attention. In shirt-sleeves, his linen, in contrast to the convicts' checked shirt, was white and spotless, with a white tie, and a fine white handkerchief tucked in his vest; his grizzled hair (not convict-clipped) well groomed on a handsome head; with the torso of a young gladiator and the easy carriage of a boxer he had a sort of repellant charm from which I freed myself with an effort saying to myself; "Raffles, raised to the *n*th power!"

CHAPTER III

DAN WHEELER

WHEN I had personally seen my directions carried out I made my first round of the ward. It seemed that the convict nurses had kept only partial charts of the bed cases. And the ward, although clean, needed better ventilation. It was also evident that there were a number of grafter "convalescents" who needed weeding out.

All this time I felt that not a move or a word of mine was missed by the man of the white linen. Yet, in his noiseless pacing of the ward, he looked at me no more than at the attendants, who gave him the full width of the aisle. Such was the impression he made on me that I remember almost nothing of my first round of the women's ward.

It took only a few minutes and when I came back through the little office the man stood in a Napoleonic attitude looking out at the river. Even his repose spoke of power and menace. As if in fear, every man kept at a distance, and as he stood in proudly contemptuous silence he seemed the embodiment of loneliness. His sinister presence, nevertheless, seemed to fill that ward as an electric charge fills a Leyden jar.

Even the German, though busily rattling his bottles as he filled his drug-box for sick-line, by his very bravado showed his share in the strange subjection.

For my part, although I knew that the sick-line was to be the test by which the prison as a whole would size up "the next victim," I was relieved when the bell rang and, with Henry at my heels, I went down into the main prison.

Each gang of prisoners from the quarries filing in in close lock-step, with the long row of striped legs swinging in unison, looks very like a huge black and white centipede. Now and then, as a man in the line passes the head keeper at the door he raises his right hand. A nod from old Kinney, and the man steps out of the line of his gang to take his place at the end of the sick-line which is forming along the outer wall.

This morning there are fifty-odd men in line, and I know that half of them are probably malingerers—"fakers"—come to try out the new doctor. There is, moreover, among prisoners and keepers alike an air of relaxed discipline, of anticipation. This, too, I know is tolerated by the keepers as a part of my initiation.

But it mustn't last long. Now and then old Kinney bellows: "Step lively, there!" in a deafening roar, or a keeper barks sharply at his gang—"Close up, there!" For all this must be finished on time. The doctor mustn't delay the game—he must be quick with his diagnosis and prescriptions—or everybody's dinner will be cold and all the prison machinery thrown out of gear.

I am already listening to the gruff or whining complaints as the men come up in turn. First, a hoarse rasp of a voice:

"An awful cough, Doctor!" (Hollow example.) "And a pain in here all the time."

"For how long?" clapping stethoscope to his chest.

"About two weeks."

"Breathe deep! *Again!*" Then, turning to Henry, "Brown Mixture—q. 3 h. *Next!*"

"Come! Step lively!" bellows Kinney.

The man takes his first dose from the tin cup, gives tier and number to Henry, and passes on to the dinner-line. Meanwhile the next man is intoning a nasal whine of rheumatism. After a brief test I am suspicious, so turn to Kinney.

"Up to the hospital for the afternoon.—next!" Kinney takes him off the list of his gang and checks his name for hospital without demur. This device is mine. While it

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gives me an opportunity to examine the man at leisure, it deprives him at once of his dinner and of his afternoon at work in the quarry. A sick man would not mind, but a well man with an appetite—and such an appetite! I notice Kinney's eyes twinkle at the man's blank face as he moves on.

The next man shuffles up unsteadily. His face is drawn with terror; his bloodshot eyes protrude; every muscle is shaking and his voice is weak and husky. "Doctor," he chatters, "I've just c-come up from the Tombs. I've b-been drinking hard and I'm seeing things. For God's sake help me! Gimme some k-kind o' dope or——"

"One ounce tincture digitalis. Send him to hospital for the afternoon. *Next!*" This man is near the shrieking, violent stage and will bear watching. For the same reason this dose of digitalis, which would tie a normal heart in knots, will just put him on his feet. It is new to Henry, however. He pours out one ounce and holds it up.

"You mean *dot?*" He grunts contemptuously.

"Yes." Out of the corner of my eye I see a malicious grin on his ugly face as he gives the dose and watches the man afterward, sure that he will drop.

Just at this moment, however, a man leaning against the wall half-way down the line suddenly slides to the floor. On pretext of helping, a number of men jump out of line with excited shouts. There is the beginning of a general stampede. Before it has fairly begun, however, I have turned to Kinney to find that he is watching *me* keenly instead of the line. So I ask him coolly: "Please call them into line!" The words are hardly out of my mouth when with one roar: "*Every man to his place!*" he quells the disturbance as a man would blow out a match. Then, telling Henry to bring the water-pail, I walk down to the tense figure on the floor. His fall, as well as his color, arouse my suspicion. So I wipe the foam from his lips and smell it. Keeping an expressionless face with an effort, I turn to Henry who stands ready with his pail of water: "Let him have it!" And Henry heaves the cold water on him.

The man gasps, strangles, opens his eyes and sits up dripping. Just loud enough for some of the line to hear I announce: "You'd better *not* use scented soap next time, my friend! Castile tastes better," and return to my desk.

He gets up, grins sheepishly and moves on to the dinner-line. Meanwhile a number of the prisoners are exchanging glances, while Kinney shakes with an inward chuckle. I know that I have scored.

A large volume could be filled with the more or less ingenious plots of the fakers. They scheme hard to work the doctor for change of scene and rest. It means a change from drudgery, musty food and reeking cells to good food and comfortable idleness in hospital. Who can blame them?

And to-day I find many of them are engaging infants, after all. A round dozen of the men leave the waiting sick-line to follow the defeated epileptic—fakers by open confession, and those who are left show approval in their faces. They are disposed of in good time, and as I pass Kinney on the way to my noon meal he rumbles:

"Ye've got 'em goin'. Go *to* thim!"

The Doctor's meals in those days was served in lonely state in a room which, after meal hours, served as a club-room for the keepers. My exultation over the little triumph of the sick-line did not last long. Before I had half finished my dinner four keepers shuffled in noisily, smoking, spitting and swearing. They were as tough-looking loafers as any crooks in cells, and they were soon joined by more of the same ilk. Soon their talk became not only profane but foul.

This was the one thing I could not endure, so I quietly got out, followed by derisive guffaws.

My next duty was to go with the Head Keeper to visit "the isolated." These were cases undergoing special punishment (dark cells on bread and water) and insane or drug cases so noisy as to require segregation. Then I hurried up to the hospital to see to my appendicitis boy, as well as the "Hoboes"—for thus the men sent up for the afternoon at once christened themselves.

"The Exhorters" were in possession of the ward that afternoon and when I arrived I found them in full swing. A gaunt, flinty-faced female of fifty-odd New England Winters was pacing the aisle and giving brazen voice to the thoughts that were in her. They had already distributed hymn-books, opened at the right place.

The preacher woman approached her climax. She had told the men what a bad lot they were, that they were the worst ever and that there was little hope for them here or hereafter. Then she repeated the fiend-

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ish old formula: "Repent, ye miserable sinners, before it is tew late. To-night yew may be called before your Maker and sent to burn in torment. Repent, I say, before it is tew late! Naow let's all sing No. 42—'Pull for the Shore.'"

Waving her hymn-book as she paced the ward, she started the tune in a tinny yell, always a tone or two flat. As the old ladies, then a few of the men, reluctantly followed, I went to my patient.

He had made an effort to appear comfortable when I had left him an hour before, but Henry had deliberately neglected to give him his second dose of anodyne and he was still suffering acutely. "It was better, Doctor, after you fixed me up. And Welch has filled the ice-bag; but—if I had some more of the dope I guess I'd be all right—maybe they forgot it——" He didn't dare say more, but his pinched features, hard abdomen and rising temperature told of stubborn inflammation.

"I'd be better if I could hold still—but I can't keep from thrashin'. It wasn't so bad till that woman began shoutin'."

The discords filling the stuffy air were doing their work, and superstitious fears had already had their turn. I approached the masterful maiden to plead for mercy.

"I beg pardon, madam, but I have at least one patient who needs quiet. I must ask you as a favor to postpone——"

She was eyeing me with hostile suspicion: "Young man! Do yew think that expounding the Holy Scripture can hurt anybody?"

"But this man is suffering too much to listen, and he needs absolute rest."

"Do yew mean to tell me that sacred music doesn't soothe him?" She was warlike, roused.

"Pardon *me*, madam," said a pleasantly persuasive voice behind me, "but that is not the point at all. The music, the melody of your singing, the haunting sweetness of your voice, tortures while it charms them all. Remorse and longing make them restless, you see, and nothing but silence and sleep can soothe them."

It was said with such winning earnestness, with such a tone of respectful adoration that I turned to admire the artist. Again I felt a shock as I met the face of the man of the white handkerchief. There was no venom in its look now. But in the strong features and steady tawny eyes there was that persuasion which no woman can resist.

The lady bridled and almost blushed.

"Poor man! Well, we shall come again in two weeks. Doctor, please distribute these tracts. I trust yew'll read this one—it's specially consecrated—'The Criminal's Death: an Awful Warning,'" and she bustled out, followed by her two plump satellites, through my little office into the women's ward. Riley held open the door and got redder in the face; the diplomat in stripes swept them a graceful bow at the threshold.

When the door had closed behind the black figures, leaving us three in the office, Riley let loose the cackle he had been holding. But for me the humor of the thing was lost in genuine relief and gratitude.

Turning to our rescuer who stood, again grim and silent, in the doorway of the ward, I impulsively held out my hand. But when his coolly contemptuous gaze was turned on me I felt singularly young and stupid. Trying to be easy and natural, I only succeeded in making my tone insufferably patronizing as I said:

"Shake! You ought to have a medal."

When he was smiling at the preacher woman the sinister menace of his face had changed to an expression almost pleasant. Now, at first he seemed about to take my hand in a similar spirit. Then the mouth drew and hardened, the eyes narrowed and he quickly withdrew his hand. As I finished my inane speech he turned on his heel with a hoarsely growled "Hell!"—and I was left staring, holding out my hand at the empty doorway!

The "Hoboes" on the bench opposite could have seen all this. But with eyes on the floor they sat motionless, their faces a blank. I turned to Riley. With back toward me he was fussing with the key in the other door.

Dazed and perplexed I took a step or two out into the ward and gazed at the retreating back of the man of mystery. Again I was forced to admire the smooth, powerful stride, the well-knit body borne without jar or effort, the well rounded occiput and muscular neck. It was the old mystery (misnamed "magnetism"—"temperament," what-not) of force—force abounding and virile. And it was hostile!

Riley, just coming out of the office, stepped up beside me.

"Who *is* he, Riley?"

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Riley opened wide his eyes: "Who? Him? Why I thought you knew! That's Dan; Dan Wheeler!"

CHAPTER IV

MORE WARNINGS

I SAT in the little office when Riley roused me from my musings by: "Shall I send in the Hoboes, Doctor?"

"Certainly."

He ordered them in, speaking roughly as became a good screw, helped strip them for examination when necessary and proved very useful and willing. There was a noticeable change in his manner toward me which I was utterly at loss to explain.

In this lot of seven men sent up for examination there were two who really needed to be kept in hospital for treatment; three who could be treated outside, but needed to be transferred to other work; and two who openly offered to pay, or to have friends pay for them, seventy-five dollars each, for three months in hospital as "convalescents." I explained to these last that I expected to fill the ward with men who *needed* treatment. Also I told them the hospital would not be run in that way any more.

This was too much for their credulity. Moreover they took my mildness for timidity and showed signs of bluster; upon which Riley stepped in and "fired them."

"Y'see, Doctor, if you treat 'em white, they think y're afraid of 'em," he explained.

"They'll know better after we get acquainted."

"I dunno. They're a bad lot," with the assurance of a general fallacy.

"I'm not so sure of that. I believe most of them would respond to decent treatment," I answered with conviction.

Here I was sure that a slippered step had paused just outside the thin partition. At once I had an odd feeling of being shadowed —as if the whole prison were watching and listening. It seemed unreasonable at the time, but later I found that it was almost literally true. In some way, the bulk of the prisoners learned before morning the doings of that day in the hospital. Often as I had this fact proved to me, I never knew how it came about. I was about to step outside to see who was listening when Riley called my attention to the "requisition list" waiting to be signed, lying on the table.

This list, made out daily by Henry and signed by the Doctor, went to the "store" of the Department every night, and the hospital supplies came down by boat next morning. I noticed that "Sp. Frumenti" was far in excess of the amount needed. But I was not ready to bring up this issue just then, so signed the list without comment.

My work finished I felt that I was now free to go in town if I chose. The sick boy, however, needed attention. Although he was quiet and fairly comfortable, his fever still ran moderately high. Since Henry was not only useless but apparently bent on interfering with my treatment, there was only one thing to do—I must watch the case myself, if I had to stay in the ward all night. So I went to my room for some books, brought them back to the little office and established myself there.

The few hours that followed decided the outcome of my service at the Pen, but of this I was serenely ignorant. I read undisturbed in the office, visiting the boy's bed about every half hour. His anxiety to report himself better, to please me, made his statements of little value. But he certainly was no worse, for his temperature rose no higher. The hospital attendants, as well as the other prisoners in the ward, showed the same slight but unmistakable change in spirit that I had noticed in Riley. They had stopped snickering and guying and the ward was absolutely quiet.

Wheeler, however, paced the aisle ceaselessly, aloof and lowering, the embodiment of potential disaster. And Henry's malevolence became more marked as the afternoon wore on. From time to time he muttered spitefully to the nurses. That he got little encouragement made him only the more vicious.

Four o'clock came and the prison clanged with closing doors as the men came in from work and were locked in their cells.

Six o'clock brought more noise and bustle. The night shift of guards came on; Riley went in town to his family; and I went down to my supper. Again, I was routed by the keepers, with their smoke and murky talk.

When I reentered the ward, however, a pleasant surprise awaited me. I found the little office transformed. A cheerful red cloth covered the table, which bore an appetizing supper. On the radiator, over a

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blue-flame burner, a coffee-pot filled the small room with its fragrance.

The night keeper, presiding over this scene, was unmistakably a gentleman. What is more, he seemed to expect me. As I approached, he said pleasantly:

"My name is Lawson. I hope you'll join me. I have laid a plate for you."

Never did anything taste so good as that supper. We both talked at once so fast that the coffee got cold and he had to make another pot. Soon we were telling the stories of our lives.

"I knew you were a Harvard man," said he at the end of my narrative, "and you're the first one I've had a chance to talk to on the island. Now I think I can help you a lot."

"I don't doubt it," said I gratefully. "First off, what does 'cough medicine' mean?"

"Easy. Ask me something hard. But how is the boy?"

I bolted, conscience-stricken, only to find my patient much better. Then I returned to the office in triumph.

"He'll get well, sure, now. But now tell me about 'cough medicine.'"

"That, my boy, was a hint which may put a powerful weapon in your hands." He leaned forward to whisper. "The chief source of Henry's pull with the screws is 'cough medicine.'"

"What?" I shouted.

"Sh-h! It's a fact. There are a lot of steady nippers among the screws, and Henry fills their flasks, which are sent up marked 'Cough Medicine,' with *booze*. See?"

"See? Well I should say so! Whee-e-e-yip!" and I banged the table in exultation. "But why didn't you tell Mac? He wanted to run the service right."

"You forget. You're the only Doctor that ever stayed on duty after six, when I come on."

"That's a fact. But who wrote that slip?'

"Probably Wilmer, the Dep.'s secretary and stenographer. He's a decent chap. He was a bank cashier and they say he is doing time for another man's steal."

"Well, I certainly am indebted to him," said I. "I can put *one* crimp in the Dutchman anyhow!"

Just then there was a curious noise outside and Lawson immediately hurried out of the office. When he came back he excused himself by saying: "I thought it was some of the men out of bed after hours; but Wheeler is a privileged character."

"Say, who *is* this Wheeler?"

He again raised a warning hand, as he whispered: "His real name is Daniel Wheeler, but to the profession he is known as 'Sled' Wheeler."

"*What!*" I shouted again. "Not the 'Sled Wheeler' that Josiah Flynt counts among the five most famous living crooks?"

"The same man," he nodded.

After a few minutes for recovery I asked: "What's he doing, serving a short sentence among the small fry?"

"Oh, he's only 'doing a bit' through a little piece of private spite worked by a frame-up and a bought-up judge. He long ago made his bargain with the Central Office, and this town is safe for him—and from him. In fact he has quite a lot of political influence." Here he pulled up in alarm.

"Well?" I said.

He got up to look out at the door cautiously. As he sat down he said in a lower whisper: "He can hear like an Indian."

"What if he can?" I said aloud. "What is all this cheap mystery, anyhow?"

"But it's no joke, I tell you," he said with sudden seriousness. "As I said, the man has big political influence. If you stay here a month you'll know *that's* no joke! Besides—*Dan has killed almost as many men as 'Wild Bill' Hickok already*, and he has a fiendish temper. If he were to 'croak' one of these poor crooks right now, or you or me for that matter—he'd probably get off scot free! My boy, you don't know what a tight little despotism this island is!"

He paused and I sat silent. I recalled Mac's worried look and his warnings. Surely they took this thing too seriously. However, I was vaguely uneasy.

"Another thing," resumed Lawson in his stage whisper, "you would better go slow with this drug orderly. You don't know these people as I do."

"Can't make an omelet without breaking eggs," said I with more assurance than I felt. "I'm going to cut down that whisky requisition to-morrow anyhow—just for a starter." And although he did much talking—showing how it was possible to land in stripes without doing anything at all, etc., I would not be persuaded.

"If that's the case, might as well *do* something anyhow and have a run for your money," I said, and went to bed to dream of it.

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The next morning, to my surprise, I was allowed to finish my breakfast undisturbed and started at once for the hospital. In the lower hall I met the Dep.

"Well, Doctor," said he briskly. "How goes it?"

"Not so bad," I answered.

"So I hear." Then, in a lower tone, he added kindly: "I hear you're a boxer. Now take it from me: Don't try to get in the 'sleep wallop' until you've got your man going. If you fail to land, you may take the count yourself. So long!"

"Thank you. So long!"

As I climbed the stairs I marveled again at the quick news service of the prison. But these repeated warnings had irritated me and roused my obstinacy. I was more than ever determined to begin hostilities at once.

CHAPTER V

WHEELER STRIKES

MY RESOLUTION was strengthened by finding that the drug orderly had made an attempt to get at my appendicitis case. Luckily I had left orders with Walsh, one of the nurses who had shown a disposition to help me, not to give *anything* prepared by Henry. He at once showed me a dose the German had fixed to be given at six o'clock, saying it was the medicine I had ordered. It was a violent emetic and might have resulted in the boy's death! Henry came in just as Walsh showed me the glass, which he had hidden; and that worthy cast a glance at us that was fairly murderous.

However I went at the alteration I had planned in the ward. Whenever it was necessary I spoke to the drug orderly in the same quiet tone that I used with all the prisoners, entirely ignoring his ugly scowls, although with these adornments of his natural charms he had a gargoyle beaten to a standstill. I got all the histories written up, ruled charts and showed Riley as well as the nurses how to keep them, had the windows fixed for better ventilation, and finally changed the arrangement of the beds.

Not only did Riley prove an efficient aid with his knowledge gained in hospital at Bellevue, but the prisoners, both attendants and patients, were as pleased as children with a new game. All this raised my spirits hugely, despite the growing sullenness of mine enemy the drug orderly.

Wheeler slept late in his curtained recess at the end of the ward. When he was roused there was a prodigious sloshing in the adjoining bathroom before he appeared, spotless and clean shaven. Not a man spoke to him; he did not deign to notice them, and if he noted our improvements he gave no sign.

So the work in the ward went on fairly well, except that Riley, who had been on his weekly drunk the night before, soon had to quit and lie down.

The sick-line, too, went off smoothly and my dinner was undisturbed. It was then that, although the keepers passed me in sullen silence, I began to get uneasy. Things were going too well and I began to fear there was a storm brewing. I could see no reason for such a change and it was with actual relief that I regarded the German's steadily malicious scowl.

All the afternoon while I read in the little office, this unrest grew upon me. Once when Henry was out on an errand to the tiers Wheeler went to the drug-cabinet and made a few swift, noiseless movements among the bottles. Then, a moment later, when I looked for him, he was not in sight. He returned while I was called for a few minutes into the women's ward. It was not long after this that I happened to see his face as he turned toward the office door; its seething malignity was startling! Something recalled to me at that moment one of Lawson's dissuading arguments: "Wheeler takes his snifter as regular as clock-work, and you'd better be careful how you cut off the supply." Could he have overheard?

At first, as I thought of the far-fetched, melodramatic mystery with which Mac, the Deputy Warden and Lawson had surrounded the situation, it seemed laughably absurd. My own growing apprehension only increased my annoyance and I tried hard to believe the whole thing a practical joke. It was useless. Every face I recalled was stamped with purpose, passion or fear positively tragic.

"Doctor, here's Henry with the requisition for you to sign."

Six quarts of "Sp. Frumenti" was the first item on the list. I altered the "six" to "two," signed and handed back the book to the German.

Then I turned to leave the ward, ignoring

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the angry twisting of his face as well as his muttered curse. Again he growled some guttural filth and I turned my head enough to see Wheeler gliding noiselessly toward us with narrowed gleaming eyes which seemed to throw out a cold, greenish flame! I was frozen to the spot, with shivers running up to the very back of my neck. The German, with his blighting visage turned toward me, was fumbling in the drug-cabinet—the shelf where Wheeler had been—muttering shocking German oaths. He saw no one but me.

Wheeler never moved his eyes, which were fixed on Henry, but gritted through clenched teeth:

"*Go on!* You don't want to see this!"

Somehow I knew he meant me, but I couldn't move. Henry, however, jumped as if he had heard a rattler. As he turned and met Wheeler's eyes, his viciously sullen face paled, his mouth fell open and drew down until his brutal features became a veritable Tragic Mask of terrified Horror!

Riley sprang from his chair near the door and whispered: "Now! Now! Dan!" in what he meant to be a low, soothing tone. Wheeler's eyes never swerved as he said in a low growl:

"You miserable bum! Go into the office and stay there!" Riley went!

Again Wheeler repeated monotonously: "Go on! You don't want to see this!"

Still motionless, for three seconds that seemed like hours, I watched him hold the German with an unwinking glare. Then he wheeled and walked swiftly toward his bed at the far end of the ward.

Then, and not before, I felt that I could move. After a look at Henry, who seemed turned to stone—hypnotized with fear—I opened the door and started down-stairs. I don't remember feeling any emotion except surprise at finding that my knees were shaking under me.

I was surely not the fellow who came up these stairs yesterday morning! Was Wheeler sane? What reason for his rage—and should I be the next target for it? Yet the man had an overwhelming fascination for me. As I reached the bottom of the stairs I said half aloud, "*Why* did he go back to his bed?"

"*Whee-e-e-ew,*" shrilled the speaking tube by the foot of the stairs. Old Kinney appeared from nowhere and answered it, listened a moment, then swore softly and yelled to his near-by lieutenant:

"*Devery! Up to the hospital! Quick! Come on, Doctor! We'll need ye!*" And tore up the stairs three steps at a time, with us at his heels. In spite of his age he held his lead to the top, burst open the door and half dived, half fell into the ward. There he pulled up short and gasped hoarsely:

"By God! I belave he's killed 'um!"

A writhing blood-red thing on the floor sobbed and hiccoughed. Now a hoarse choked screech came from where the face should have been.

"Ya-a-a-a—help! He's killed me! Ya--a-a—Ag-ga-a—" hiccoughing and rising again in horrid cracked falsetto as the thing struggled to its knees. Then it collapsed heavily, sobbing: "Ach, Gott! Ach, Gott! Ach, Gott! Ach, Gott!" over and over again, while the blood streamed between fingers pressed to the gashed pulp where the face had been and ran down over hands and wrists to the red and slippery pools on the floor!

Looking down at this stood Wheeler, holding in his clenched hand the broken, jagged neck of a heavy glass water-bottle. In his face now there was no rage—simply contempt, annihilation, the ruthless, merciless destructive power of an elemental force.

The quivering red creature on the floor again seemed to feel his presence. It managed to grovel to Kinney's feet, clasping his knees, yammering and sobbing hysterical prayers for protection in a very ecstasy of fear.

Wheeler was the first to move. With a sudden effort he threw the ugly weapon from him and walked quietly away. At once the spell was broken. Kinney ordered Devery back to his post and every prisoner to his bed. Two trusties with mops cleaned up the floor and the ward resumed its usual quiet. Meanwhile, with the assistance of Riley and Walsh, I washed, sewed and plastered up the victim. It took more than an hour. But, after we had finished and got him in a bed screened off from the rest of the ward it was necessary to give him a powerful sedative. Every sudden sound startled him into a panic of terror, and it took a half-hour more to get him comfortably quiet. Even then there was an abiding look of abject fear in his eyes.

When at last I sat alone in the little office I felt unaccountably tired. I noted that the blood-stained bottle-neck lay on the window-sill. As I picked it up and sat

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idly turning it over in my hand my eyes closed. First the lined and distorted face of a dope-fiend came out of the dark and mouthed at me; then the strange panorama of faces as they had followed one another in sick-line; then the blood-red thing writhing and flopping heavily on the floor.

My eyes sprang wide open to see Wheeler, cool and contemptuous, looking in at the door. I had felt his eyes, and as I encountered them this time there was quite a new expression there. Was it hostility? For an instant it occurred to me it was my turn—then he was gone. Again I was very much alone, and very lonely, as the Winter dusk slowly darkened the ward.

CHAPTER VI

SOME EXPLANATIONS

FOR a half hour nothing happened to interrupt my reflections. Again I found myself wondering whether I should wake presently to find all this a part of a bad dream. My thoughts started on forty different lines and every one ended with a question. Out of this chaos of speculation two queries came uppermost. Why had Wheeler spoiled my drug orderly? And what would happen to him as a result? The last question a little time would answer. Wheeler alone could answer the first.

But he was certainly not the man to unbosom himself to a new acquaintance. Mac's advice had been "Keep your mouth shut and drive slow!" It seemed to fit the case at present. Moreover, I wanted to get out of these stifling stone walls for a breath of relief. I would take a look through the women's ward and go in town—perhaps go to the theater. I stepped to the door, looking down the darkened ward, and called, "Riley!"

A solitary figure outlined against a west window turned and came swiftly toward me. At once I recognized Wheeler's athletic stride. As he came nearer the lights were turned on. Again I was struck by the contrast between the prison stripes and his free, proud bearing. But his face was inscrutable as he said quietly:

"He is sleeping off last night's jag on my bed. Shall I wake him?"

"It isn't worth while. I only wanted to go through on the other side." I spoke coolly, but with an inward sinking I realized that there was no one in charge of the ward! All in it were at the mercy of this man—and what manner of man or demon was he?

He had turned and was now half way down the aisle. I followed him. Near its head a small table bore a mirror and a few toilet articles, all of the best. I noticed, as one will in moments of suspense, that Wheeler's hands were perfect in shape, well cared for and marvelously supple. They were now passing over Riley's inert form with practised celerity. When Wheeler stood up with the key and moved quickly away, Riley had not winked an eyelid.

Wheeler had not once glanced at me or any one in the ward, but as I followed him back to the office I looked at the men, sitting quietly by their beds. Not one looked up, not one moved—it was positively ghostly!

Once back in the little room, he made no move to open the heavy door. He put the key in his pocket, leaned back easily against the window-seat, with a hand resting on the edge at either side, and faced me with a look at once proud and compelling.

At loss as to the meaning of this and for lack of anything better to do, I sat down. The one incandescent overhead brought out in bold relief the man's merciless face, stern and aggressive.

But I could read nothing there. Was it *my* turn now? It seemed that he was not to suffer any consequences for what he had already done. If he chose, he might serve me in the same way. Suddenly he spoke in low, even tones. "That cur will go out to work in the quarry as soon as he can walk."

He paused and, in moving his hand, it encountered the stained bottle-neck lying beside him! He picked it up and turned it over reflectively as he went on in sharp sentences: "You may be sure I'm telling you the truth. There is no mystery about it. I have influence in the right place. Moreover, the Dep. is an old friend. He has entire faith in my judgment. As to the management of the hospital, what I say *goes!*"

He caught my astonished gaze and held it. "I told him," he said more slowly and distinctly, as if waiting for me to get the full meaning of his words, "I told him to keep the screws out of your dining-room. I told him I wanted to try you out. I told him to keep hands off, to give you no hint that would put you on your guard."

He broke off and looked out into the ward.

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The orderlies were bringing in the ward supper in large covered tin pails, which they set upon the table with a clang. Wheeler stepped quickly to the door and looked out at them. At once it was so quiet I could hear my watch tick.

"I have watched you and had you shadowed. I know all you have said, all you have done, from the time you entered the prison 'to make good for Mac'"—this with a hint of irony—"until, in spite of all warnings, you cut off the supply of 'Cough Medicine'."

Suddenly his face hardened, his eyes narrowed viciously, his very voice roughened as he said: "You saw what I did with *this!*" With the bottle-neck gripped in his right hand, he made a sudden gashing movement that turned me sick! Then he tossed it away behind him. His eyes were gleaming. "You thought it disgusting—brutal!" His lip curled. "But do you know what *this* is?"

With one swift movement he pulled from his pocket and uncorked a small glass-stoppered bottle. As he thrust it within a foot of my face I caught the sharp fumes of sulphuric acid—oil of vitriol.

"*You know what that would do to your face!*" He bent his head forward and peered at me through narrowed lids. Meanwhile I sat benumbed, as in a nightmare.

Slowly he raised and pointed an accusing finger, biting off each incisive word:

"*That cur had this fixed for you!* He counted on provoking you to attack him! In the clinch you would get this in the face—an accident—*your fault!* Understand? He would claim *you tried* to throw it on *him*. And without friends or influence you might even be landed in stripes—in this very prison! Worse things have happened."

He corked and set down the bottle in the window. Then, folding his arms, he spoke with his former low distinctness:

"When the time came he reached for this bottle behind the others in the cabinet where he had put it, but I had been there before him. That is why 'Mac' will know your face when he sees it again."

He paused. In the hush I could hear the lonely hoot of a tug on the river. With a rush the reality came over me, but it was impossible for me to realize it all at once, though I knew every word he spoke was true. Then, as I pictured the scene and what he had saved me from, I was forced to swallow twice before I could speak at all.

"But *why* did you——" Again I swallowed a lump.

"I found you disposed to treat these poor devils white," he went on somberly, as if he had not heard. "I believed you had the nerve to see it through. You'll find you need it. So I didn't stand for you getting any the worst of it the first crack out of the box. Then, when the cur made his play, or tried it, I saw he had got to have it. I had warned him, but he mutinied—had a swelled head. So I told you to go on, because I knew you wouldn't want to see me at work on him." The tiger-light again burned in his eyes as he turned them on me.

"Now you listen to me. You've been brought up among white folks. You don't know these animals. You have got to *do* such a brute *right!* For two reasons. First, for the example, the effect on others who might outgrow their hats. The other reason: If I had let up on him when I had him down, he would have got over being afraid and some day he'd have tried to croak me, or you. Now he'll *stay* afraid while he bears my marks, and that's for life. He is '*broke*,' as we say. It's the only way but one, and *that* I never take unless it's *necessary!*"

His manner carried conviction. I was undergoing strange changes inside, and my nerves were all on edge.

"Why did you start back for your bed?" I asked presently.

"To get you out of the way, where you wouldn't see it, and because I had on slippers. I had decided to put on heavy shoes. I intended to call him into the office here and kick him to a pulp."

"What stopped you?" I asked, gripping the chair-arms in tense and causeless excitement.

He didn't answer at once; a painful flush spread over his face, even into his hair:

"My damned temper! I told you I had picked you for a winner—concluded you were square. That's why you can have a new drug orderly, or anything you want in this ward. But that wasn't all. I found you had no use for the screws' dirty stories and all that kind of filth. Now, you may not believe it of a crook, or you may call me cracked, *but* this is how I'm built. If a man's square, he gets *me*. If he's *clean* besides, he gets me some more. After you started down-stairs that whelp called you—something you probably never heard. I grabbed

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the first thing handy—this water-bottle—and *landed* him!"

All the afternoon I had been under an unnatural nervous tension. The reaction was almost too strong for my control. I felt the muscles of my face twitching and was grateful that Wheeler had turned toward the door. This was the man (according to Flynt) known and feared by the police of three continents!

For no particular reason, unless to show I had recovered composure, I asked: "But what shall I do for a drug orderly?"

When he turned, something like a smile made his saturnine face strangely attractive, almost boyish: "Just wait! It's too good to spoil. But you needn't worry about this ward any more. You can be sure of that."

As if to prove the truth of this, the Deputy Warden stepped through the door behind him. With a swift look from me to Wheeler, his face expressed lively satisfaction as he said cheerily:

"Well, Doctor, I congratulate you. I see you've won in the first round!"

His voice softened in genuine affection as he put his hand on Wheeler's shoulder:

"And what have you been doing to old Dan here? I haven't seen him smile for a month! It has been mighty lonesome for him here." Wheeler was blushing like a girl, although there was still the strange greenish light in his eyes.

"Oh, he was just laughing at one of his own jokes," I said. "If you'll let me out of here, I'll leave you fellows to talk it over. I see you want to."

As he held open the door for me to pass into the women's ward, Wheeler growled a hoarse: "Good night!"

CHAPTER VII

A NEW ENEMY

NOW that Dan Wheeler had smashed my drug orderly I was in full control of the male ward. If, however, I would be Penitentiary Physician in more than name, I had a still harder task before me.

To wrest the scepter of the woman's ward from the Head Matron was a handful by itself. But, if the great cracksman turned against me on this issue, most gruesome were the forecasts as to my finish.

Therefore, on this the morning when I was first to face the Head Matron, I watched the great crook as he paced the aisle of the men's ward, greatly attracted by this man of sin, but hardly daring to approach him. Once I fancied he was about to address me, but he had turned away before I had got my mouth open. If only—but that is one of the little ifs that would have made such a big difference.

And now Riley was approaching to report: "Doctor, the Dowwager Impress is on the other side and would like t' speak t' ye."

Wheeler had paused to listen without turning his head, and over his shoulder came unmistakably:

"Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came!"

A few beds were occupied at the far end of the long white ward. At a sunny south window facing the door as I entered, her kind motherly face bent over her sewing, sat Aunt Polly, adviser and comforter to the unfortunate and suffering, and incidentally one of the most successful diamond-thieves speaking the English tongue. On my left, at the desk, the Head Matron sat in state. Mrs. Sullivan, hospital matron, stood by her chair; while farther back in shadow was a gracefully slender figure in stripes.

A large woman in black, overdressed and bejeweled, with a pitiless face out of which looked hard bluish eyes, my first feeling at seeing the Head Matron was relief. For we fear only the unknown, and here was no enigma—only a vicious, disappointed woman who tortured the unfortunates in her charge for that she had been denied her woman's heritage of love and happiness.

For a moment my eyes wandered to the slender prisoner. Beautiful, despite the ugly stripes and tight-drawn hair, her features were pure and her outlines curves of grace. Yet in the dark-lashed eyes was the hopeless longing of a castaway. For this was Fannie Wellman, the only life sentence left on the island, who had shot her young husband in a fit of jealousy.

But the Head Matron had ground out the usual commonplaces and I came forward with the corresponding lies, grossly overdone; but she swallowed it all and purred: "And how do you find your accommodations, Doctor? Is everything satisfactory?"

"Oh, perfectly. I am delighted."

"I am glad of that. Our servants are all prisoners and need watching. If your meals are not well served, you must let me

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know and I'll see that you are made comfortable."

"So very kind of you," I murmured.

"Don't mention it. I always help the young doctors." (She had done her best to land two of them in prison.) "And now, Doctor, I want to warn you about these women. You want to watch out for them. They are such *horrible* liars—you can't believe *one word they say!*" She shook her earrings virtuously.

"You don't say!" I opened eyes wide with horror.

"And feigning sickness!" she went on, holding up all her rings. "Doctor, you can't imagine how *shameless* they are."

"The horrid things!" I said. "Now isn't that mean? But I'm so grateful to you for your kindness in warning me."

"Oh, I always give the young doctors good advice," she bridled. "They are exposed to *so* many temptations!"

"Now that's so *sweet* of you!" I gushed. "I do hope you will advise me. I am far from home influences in this wicked city."

I have never understood what impelled me to this folly, unless I was a bit hysterical at this sickening palaver. Out of the corners of my eyes I could see Mrs. Sullivan's mouth, dropped open ludicrously, and Aunt Polly's sides shaking; but Fannie's eyes were wide with fright.

"Now the women used to fool Dr. Mackay right along," continued the gracious lady. "There was Kendall." Her eyes snapped as she looked toward the other end of the ward. "I had her in isolated" (dark cell on bread and water) "for impertinence. She came over the Doctor with a lying story and he had her sent up for bronchitis. Now she has no more bronchitis than I have." Her voice took on a new harshness. "You send her down to me right off, and I'll discipline her as she deserves!"

A tense silence held the room, and I could feel the eyes and ears focused on my back.

"That would be lovely," I began smoothly, but with a cold anger rising in me as I recalled the tales of this woman's beastly cruelties. Her eyes snapped. "*But*, just at present Kendall *has* bronchitis. She will not have to stay in hospital more than a month longer——"

"A month——"! She began with a cracked scream. "You— Do you know that her time is out in a month?"

She had not fully realized the enormity of my impertinence as yet, but her face was working as it began to dawn on her.

"Now isn't that provoking?" said I innocently. "But never mind! Perhaps she will get in again soon."

Aunt Polly had turned to see, but the itching cruelty in that twisting old face was positively indecent.

"You —— ——— ——! Do you know who—— *You'll follow Radburn before I'm through with you! You* —— ——!" She choked, but that's not the reason we quote no further. She was a woman—once. It didn't last long. I held the door open for her furious exit, and when her footsteps on the iron stairs had ceased, I turned to the three who were left: "Who's Radburn?"

"My word!" said Aunt Polly, still holding her sides, "but you hought to be hon the stage! 'Far from 'ome', says you! Whee-oo-hoo——" Her breathy chuckles dangerously suggested asthma.

"Stop it!" Fannie stamped her foot angrily. She then turned to me with tears of vexation in her eyes:

"Doctor, *why* did you make her so angry? *Didn't* you know she is the sister-in-law of the John Darcy who landed Radburn, the English actor, just because Radburn had run away with his daughter? Now the old beldame will go to him with this and God knows what they will do to you!" She threw her arms across the desk and buried her face on them. I turned to Mrs. Sullivan:

"What does this mean?" For I had never seen the woman before.

Mrs. Sullivan was a true-hearted Irishwoman, and she stroked the head on the table as she answered:

"Mrs. Darcy has bullyragged the poor girl near crazy, and she not fit to be up at all. Fannie has heard what you've done for some o' th' men, and she hoped you c'd help her. Y' see, she wouldn't tell her troubles to the other young doctors—now she's kind o' lost hope, I guess. Don't you worry, girl; Mrs. Darcy hasn't landed th' Doctor yet! I'll leave you to tell him all about it."

Fannie's story sounded like the Dark Ages. Mrs. Sullivan hadn't overstated the case. When she had finished, she made me promise to tell Dan Wheeler about the Head Matron's threat, saying he alone could help me.

I had her at once transferred to the hospital, leaving orders that nobody was to

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speak to her. Then I left the ward with Aunt Polly's words in my ears:

"We're hoff! 'Er Lidyship'll froth at the mouth wen she 'ears you've tiken Fannie out of 'er clutches. Now it'll be your 'ead or 'ers—sure!"

These repeated warnings would get on anybody's nerves; and this was not the last.

Radburn was already in the prison, and that very afternoon he was sent up to the hospital as an assistant orderly, an office created for the occasion. In ill-fitting stripes, with close cropped head, one would hardly recognize the matinée-girl's idol. But he bravely retained his nose-glasses and 'aughty Henglish stare. He told his story in full chest tones, without a whimper; and the moral thereof was the folly of opposing the political machine, or any member of it.

To cheer him up Lawson and I invited him to join us at our dinner and council of war in the little office that evening.

"Well, Doctor," began Lawson, "I shall be infernally lonesome without you, but my advice is to beat it as soon as possible!"

"Just because Mrs. Darcy has threatened me?"

"Just because she can carry out her threats. Look at Radburn here! You have heard him tell what John Darcy did to *him!* You have the same crowd to buck against, and you haven't his friends to back you."

"But you said I would be eaten alive when I went after the drug orderly, and I wasn't."

"And why?" said he eagerly. "Just because Dan Wheeler took a fancy to you and manhandled the German. Now you tell me yourself that you can't get near enough to Wheeler to tell him about it. Ever since you and the Head Matron fell out he has been looking"—he had lowered his tone to an apprehensive whisper—"looking daggers and bludgeons. Now suppose——"

"Wait!" I interrupted. "You forget—he promised to see me through and keep the ward in line."

"By Jove!" Radburn broke out. "You have faith in the word of a crook?"

"And think what might happen if he should cut loose on you!" added Lawson. "You saw what he did to Henry in there."

"Did *he* do *that?*" Radburn leaned forward and frowned intently. He had seen me dressing what was once the man's face.

I nodded, and the actor looked sick.

"But he had reasons," said I. "If you had heard——" Lawson's frightened stare over our heads turned us both in our chairs. In the open doorway of the ward stood the cracksman, grim and threatening. For one moment he fixed on me those benumbing amber eyes, swept the others with a careless insolent glance, and noiselessly vanished.

CHAPTER VIII

ENTER, LINTON

IF THIS were untrammeled fiction I should recount the battles that raged 'twixt me and the Head Matron, the hair-breadth 'scapes in the imminent deadly breach, and my final spectacular triumph over the heavy villainess. But so did not things happen on the island in the year 190–.

Now that war was declared, there was a puzzling period of inaction. On the women's side there was no interference with my orders, and I carried out the reforms I had planned without so much as seeing Mrs. Darcy. The only reminder of hostility was an occasional outbreak of hysterical fear by Fannie. She lay awake nights to worry about Wheeler's attitude and Mrs. Darcy's revenge.

More than once I have been asked why I stayed on in the face of so many threatening conditions. Not being introspective, I can only point out that I had Wheeler's word and that the work needed doing. Work like that no man could leave, and in doing it I was more than content. But there were other reasons why I never even thought of leaving my post.

The absolute devotion of criminals, once their confidence and gratitude are won, is a trite subject. But words can't tell it. Now that it was known throughout the prison that the new Doctor was square, was not a grafter and only wanted a chance to treat the sick, the result was almost incredible. Any man who can think it strange that a doctor did not leave such a service as that was meant for some other profession.

Three days after the Head Matron made her threats things began to occur. Unknown to me, there were doings in this interim; but the fourth evening brought Dietmann and Linton—queer how that name Linton seems to twist something inside!

My night orderly's term having expired, Dietmann was the candidate sent up for my approval. An educated middle-class Ger-

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man, new to the country, he had attempted to run an all-night Tenderloin place without the usual police protection. Therefore he was taking his first lesson in city government in a free nation.

I liked his looks, and it was to teach him his duties that I stayed up in hospital after bed-time. Then we played pinochle while we waited for calls from the tiers.

But before the game was finished he returned from a bell call to report "a fit." Close on his heels came two "trusties" bearing a limp striped figure which they dropped on the bed prepared for it. Something in their manner and handling of the body implied a contempt for their burden.

It was my first introduction to Linton, a model of muscular young manhood, with features handsomely regular, but terribly broken by dissipation and an outcast even among criminals.

All the next day Linton sat by his bed, with chin on chest, shunned by all; his dark face lined with bitter shame and sullen, hopeless suffering. All day I felt his furtive eyes following me about the ward, and purposely kept away from him.

Moreover, Wheeler, who had not let me out of his sight for the last three days, now included Linton in his suspicious watchfulness. When the day's work was over I approached Linton's bed, Wheeler took his stand at its foot, frankly listening.

"Well?" I asked, as I stopped before the new man.

"I'm ready to go down now." He spoke in a low, even tone, but without raising his eyes. I waited.

"I was faking," he added.

"But why did you do it? And why did you not keep it up?"

One swift glance from me to Wheeler, and his eyes sought the floor. "I was hired to spy on you—and to do something else," in the same level monotone.

"And you didn't do it because——"

"Because—" he raised defiant eyes to meet the threatening frown of the great cracksman—"because I saw what the crooks said was true—you were doing good work, and I'd have nothing to do with the frame-up." He looked at Wheeler steadily, even accusingly, and the big crook turned away, then walked slowly down the aisle, with head bent in thought.

In a flash it came to me—this man was eating his heart out to regain something of what he had lost. Possessing the doglike devotion of the prisoners, I could help him lift himself in the estimation of his fellows, and this, I judged, would be the first step in his regeneration. I spoke on the impulse:

"I want another orderly—to look after surgical cases after operation. Do you want the job?"

His hands, clasped in front of him, gripped each other until the knuckles cracked: "You—you don't know what I was going to do——"

"I don't *care!* Will you stay up here and help?"

He set his mouth, but in spite of him his lips quivered. After two attempts to control them he suddenly clapped his hands to his face, threw himself across the bed and deep tearing sobs shook his body.

Once it became known that I wanted the man treated like the rest of the orderlies the persecution ceased. The men were still inclined to let him alone, but when occasion required they spoke to him as to anybody else. His tremulously eager gratitude for even this was pitiful.

"Look at the move the 'Kid' gets on him when the Doctor speaks to 'im!" said Riley to Walsh, a typical Bowery bad man, with one side of his mouth drawn down where he did his talking.

"Well, 'f he didn't I'd croak 'm!" hoarsely growled that worthy.

Wheeler alone made no change in his manner. He watched both Linton and me, as a cat watches a mouse, until Radburn said it was getting on his nerves and he momently expected to see me mutilated.

This was the harder to understand in view of the fact that everything was being done not only to make my work go smoothly, but for my pleasure and amusement. Dietmann, the new drug orderly, was one of the most dignified liars and the most encyclopedic repository of misinformation that it was ever my good luck to meet. I had called him "The Professor," and the name stuck. Then the Dep. let out the secret that Radburn and Dietmann were sent up to the hospital more for my pleasure than for their comfort.

Now Radburn had proved a valuable addition to our dinner-circle in the little office—what the Professor called the "House of Lords," but Dietmann was a treasure-trove. When we had asked him to join us, it was because he seemed companionable. We

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felt called upon to explain this when it transpired that he had six figures in the German bank, as well as some real-estate and unlimited credit in town. Later, when I went in town of an afternoon he gave me a list to leave, along with a hand-bag, at a certain "fancy grocery." On the way back I brought it home, laden with things not on the prison bill-of-fare.

So, take it by and large, life moved along pleasantly enough in the Pen. Hospital, in spite of the ominous silence of "Sled" Wheeler. But the mutual suspicion between him and Linton became every day more intense.

One night Linton, in charge of a post-operative case that required constant attention, being worn with work and worry, fell asleep, and in the morning I found him snoring on the bed next his patient.

"Well, Britt, how is the wound this morning?" I asked. His pulse showed fever.

"Pretty painful, Doctor. It feels so dry —and burns like fire."

Turning to Linton, I shook his shoulder: "Hello! Wake up!" I saw that Wheeler was already on the spot, as usual, at the foot of the bed. Linton only stirred sleepily and muttered. Wheeler came a step nearer.

"Linton! Wake up! It's the Doctor!" I shook harder.

"I beg your pardon." He sat up rubbing his eyes. "I didn't mean to go to sleep." He blinked drowsily.

"I don't care for that, but why haven't you changed the pack on this wound?" I asked sharply. "This man has a temperature and he is in pain."

"The pack?" He was not yet fully awake. "I didn't know——"

"I *told you plainly*, and wrote on this chart, that the pack was to be changed every hour as long as there was any pain. You haven't touched the dressings since midnight!"

Looking up from the chart, he saw Wheeler for the first time. His sullen face flushed and his nostrils quivered. There was fight in the air and it could have but one outcome. Wheeler, in spite of his fifty years, seven bullet-scars, cracked "slats" and jaw, was as lithe as a wild-cat. He was, moreover, of the kind that can't be whipped. He once said he always licked a man if he could; if he couldn't he killed him. And yet his eyes had not the gleam of destruction I had seen there before he had broken Henry.

"*Why didn't you follow directions?*" I barked at Linton. No answer.

Then Wheeler said sweetly: "Don't you hear the Doctor speaking to you?"

As Linton only set his jaw, Wheeler went on in the precise English he could use when he chose: "You deliberately neglect your duty, and now you insult the man who picked you up. You are a treacherous *cur!*"

Linton's face twitched as if stung by a lash. "You're a *liar!*" He whipped out.

Wheeler was in the air before the sound had left Linton's lips. My muscles had grown tense as I watched and, as Wheeler made his clean, catlike spring over the intervening bed, with my left hand I caught Linton's collar and snatched him desperately to one side from under Wheeler's descent. Braced to meet a shock from in front, a side pull easily upset him and he came back over my left knee, head and shoulders to the floor, while I caught Wheeler's weight on my right shoulder.

Blinded by rage and confused by the sudden shift of position, Wheeler's right hand grasped my throat, his left was clapped to my face, thumb gouging the eye-socket. If his recognition had been a fraction of a second later, I had been a one-eyed man!

"Easy there, Dan!" I said as quietly as the pain and the relaxing grip on my windpipe would permit.

With a push and a backward spring he cleared himself from me just in time to dodge a straight left, aimed over my shoulder at his jaw. Linton had bounded to his feet. As his heavy drive fell short and his weight came forward against my back, I caught the arm that shot past my face and, aided by his momentum, with a ju-jitsu twist I leaned forward and brought him cleanly over my shoulder once more to the floor. Then, with knee on his chest, I announced: "This stops right here and now! You hear me!"

It had all happened with the rapidity of a variety knockabout act.

For the first time Linton smiled:

"All right, Doctor. Let me up, and I'll apologize—to both of you."

"That's man's talk!" I said as I rose. Then to Wheeler: "Dan, are you going to be an 'also ran'?"

He held out his hand to Linton! "I was an Indian," was all he said. Linton flushed with pleasure as he took the first hand held out to him in many months.

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For the rest of the forenoon Wheeler never looked at Linton, but again became as silent and as watchful of all my movements as before the quarrel. Linton, on the other hand, was plainly uneasy. He fidgeted, paced the aisle and ate no dinner. Moreover, he kept close watch on Wheeler and the keeper in charge of the hospital.

CHAPTER IX

A TRICK DOUBLY FOILED

RILEY, the regular keeper, was off duty for the day and his place was taken by a Jew named Schnitzer. He was a yellow cur, who had hated me ever since I had stopped one of his petty grafts. I was relieved when a message from the office came for him and he was replaced by a good-natured Irishman. So, when I had finished my noon round of the wards, I made ready to go to town, feeling sure that everything would be well in the hospital.

There was no time to spare if I would catch the two o'clock boat, so as I hurried out of the women's ward I caught up my hat and hand-bag from the table in my little office and ran for the stairway door. Just as I reached for the knob a nervous hand caught my coat and I turned to face Linton.

"Well, what is it?"

"Please look in your bag before you go, Doctor."

Snapping it open in a hurry, I saw with surprise a pasteboard box, such as contained my soiled collars for the Chinaman. "Nothing but my laundry," I said. "I forgot to take them yesterday. I didn't put them in to-day—I don't know how they came there. But I want to catch that boat!"

"Wait! *Wait!* That isn't your laundry! You'll be pinched!"

I looked at the man in astonishment.

"It's a scheme to land you!" he went on excitedly. "Ask Wheeler!"

"What the hell do you want of Wheeler?" inquired that ubiquitous person from just behind him. Then, looking round at the inquiring faces in the ward, he added: "Come into the office, if you're bound to show up your mare's-nest."

When he had closed the door, he took his old position with back to the window and, fixing a sardonic gaze on Linton: "Now, it's your move."

Linton made no attempt to conceal his excitement, as he began to speak rapidly: "I watched this man Wheeler because he was one of Mrs. Darcy's hired men. I didn't catch him at anything until to-day." I looked at Wheeler—no muscle of his granite-hewn face moved. The younger man went on: "Schnitzer came up here to-day to work the game they had tried to hire me to work. It was the old frame-up of putting expensive drugs in your bag and having you arrested for stealing them to sell in town. I watched the Sheeny so closely that he didn't get a chance to put the things in, but I saw Wheeler putting them in not five minutes ago, when you were on the other side!"

He pointed to the cracksman, with a finger that trembled, then turning to me: "Open the box and see!"

Taking out the box, I removed the cover and exposed—my collars for the Chinaman!

With open mouth and eyes staring, Linton collapsed into a chair; while the grim-visaged Wheeler still stood silent.

Holding out the box toward him, I asked: "Will you explain this?"

He turned his greenish eyes on me thoughtfully: "I put them there. You left them here yesterday."

"Well, what then? Did Linton dream all this about the drug game?"

"No. He gave it to you straight."

I waited. As he only regarded me quizzically, almost pleasantly, I broke out: "Oh, come! Loosen up! Tell me all about it." I was a bit astonished at my nerve, but it seemed to strike him favorably.

"The Jew got them in all right, but I palmed them under his nose. I learned the trick when I was in 'green goods'!"

Linton put his arms on the table and dropped his head on them.

"When the Old Cat went after your scalp, I played heavy villain. She thought I was with her, and so I got next on her frame-ups. After I had spoiled two for her, she got suspicious and sent up this dub to spy." He indicated Linton by a nod. Then went on in plain English: I tried him out by accusing him of treachery this morning. The way he went up in the air satisfied *me*. I hope *he* is satisfied now, and will leave me to run this thing," he finished grimly.

Linton dragged himself wearily to his feet. "I'm a poor fool anyhow!" said he bitterly. He turned heavily to the door.

"Wait!" I said. "I want you to stay

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right here! I want friends around me—and I need you in hospital." He still stood downcast. "Stay as a favor to me." With face working, he nodded silently, turned quickly and went out. I turned to Wheeler: "So you have been fairy godfather again! But while you were blocking the Head Matron, were you testing my nerve—as you did last time—or trying my faith in your word?"

He still regarded me unsmiling: "I told you. It was to get next to her games. It was the surest way, and there was too much at stake to let anything else stand in the way." He spoke simply, as if neither of us were concerned personally. Then he mentioned casually: "Her first plant was to have you shanghaied, but I knew the man that ran the joint—I had you shadowed anyhow——" His voice trailed off thoughtfully, as if he were reviewing the situation.

Anything I could say or do in return for what this man had done for me would be absurdly futile. There was no use trying.

"How do you suppose I enjoyed it?" I asked complainingly. "Waiting to see if you were going to remove my scalp and present it to the Head Matron?"

I fancied his eyes gleamed humorously between narrowed lids, as he said: "Haven't I kept you interested? Here I scoured the prison to fill the 'House of Lords'—and look at the Professor! You're hard to please. But that isn't all—Mrs. Darcy leaves the island for good next week!"

"How did you do that?"

"She has enemies at headquarters, and she has been too greedy. Her place is wanted for your friend, Mrs. Sullivan."

Until then, when the relief came, I didn't know how trying the suspense had been. But as he piled things up, I began to feel that if I looked much longer into those amber-green eyes I might make a fool of myself like Linton. So I turned away:

"Thanks."

"Don't mention it."

CHAPTER X

THE GORILLA

UP TO date my life has held no better seven days than the week that followed. The whole prison rejoiced over the approaching departure of the Head Matron and I was given the credit of bringing it about. It was useless to disclaim it and it would be false modesty to deny I was immensely popular.

Possessed of a fine reserve, Wheeler would not join the "House of Lords." Sometimes, however, he would join us unasked over the coffee and cigarettes and tell us of his adventures. Radburn declared it was worth being imprisoned; and I can see Linton sitting outside the office door, perfectly self-unconscious and absorbed.

Yet it seemed to me that the great crook was overcautious in keeping guard over me. He kept close watch of my every movement, and charged me never to go in town without giving him notice. I knew he was having me shadowed, and although I thought it unnecessary, I humored him because I owed him so much. So things went until the day came when Mrs. Darcy and Schnitzer were to leave the island.

That day we were having a special celebration in the little office. Over an afternoon spread Wheeler was just telling us how he came by his broken jaw—as a result of underestimating a "little dude" in a Chicago barroom.

A cackle at the door and in popped the good-natured moon-face of Devery, assistant head keeper, to say that the Doctor was wanted in the isolated corridor. There was in No. 3 an insane patient called "The Gorilla," waiting for certain people in town to do two months of red-tapery before he could be transferred to an asylum. Now he had become so violent and noisy that he needed quieting.

"Kinney's afraid he'll have all the animals howlin' if he ain't qui'ted before the menagerie comes in f'r the night."

"All right," said I, rising. "Wait until I load a hypodermic with hyoscin."

"No, you don't!" interposed Wheeler. "Not unless a *man* goes with you. You're a nice pup, Devery!" turning on him savagely. "You'd let the Doctor go in that cell and get croaked. That Gorilla'd split his head with his bucket in a second!"

"Now, ho-old on, Dan!" said the good-natured Irishman. "What's the matter with *me?* Ain't I wid 'im?"

"You!" said Wheeler with vast contempt. "You're too slow! Where's Sullivan?"

"Off fer the afternoon. There ain't a extra screw on th' island."

"Then get Kinney himself to go with you."

"Th' Old Man can hardly limp wid th' rheumatism."

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"Now, see here," I said, for I had my hyp. ready, "If I don't object, nobody else need bother about it. Come on, Devery."

But Wheeler held up a threatening finger: "It'll cost you your place, Devery."

"Well, what *can* I do, Dan?" whined the badgered man.

"What's the matter with Linton here—if some one must go?" I asked.

Linton had jumped to his feet and stood crouched forward, his face an eager question, while Wheeler looked him through.

"Oh, come on!" I said. "What's the use of all this foolishness? *I'm* going now." But Devery had the key to the corridor and he still waited, while Wheeler held Linton transfixed. At last the great crook said slowly to Linton: "All right, Kid. But you listen! If he is hurt"—he jerked his thumb toward me—"you don't want to come into this ward *on your feet!* You understand?"

As we clattered down the iron stairs Devery admitted: "Dan's dead right! That bucket hed a right to be took out o' that cell. It's iron and has sharp edges to it. Th' Gorilla c'd kill a man wid it."

"Why wasn't it taken out before the man got so violent?" I asked.

"Search me!" he shrugged. "That dirty Yiddish screw that was fired this noon hed charge o' the animal till I come on at six this mornin'. An' since then th' cuss has been raisin' hell so 't we wasn't none of us anxious t' go in there t' take it out."

The isolated corridor was as damp and silent as a vault. When Devery had closed the heavy door behind us the only light came from one window at the end of the corridor. On looking through the grated cell-door at first we could make out only the outlines of a figure lying on the cot.

This cot, of canvas on a gas-pipe frame, was hinged to the right-hand wall so that it would fold up out of the way. Between its outer edge and the cell wall on the left was a space just wide enough for a man to walk, and at the far end of this space stood the heavy iron bucket.

As we got used to the dim light we could see that the man was well named. Long armed and heavily muscled, his shirt was stripped from a powerful hairy chest, and his face was that of a low savage. Exhausted or feigning sleep, he lay on his back with one arm and leg hanging over the edge of the cot to the floor. Devery rattled the iron door and shouted "Hey there, Daly! Wake up! Here's the Doctor to see you!"

The big brute muttered sleepily, stirred a bit and resumed his regular breathing.

"Open the door," I said. "He's all right."

Devery turned the great key, but as the door swung outward he whispered: "Hadn't I better go in an' take out that bucket?"

"Oh, *damn* the bucket!" And with hypodermic in my left hand I stepped into the narrow space between the bed and the stone wall, Linton tight to my heels. Then——

"LOOK OUT!" he yelled.

Bounding upright, with a flash-like, circular movement the Gorilla caught and swung the bucket up and over, then downward viciously at my head!

The expected had happened. Watching for this very move, with right fist properly closed, I instinctively felt that to draw back would be fatal—it would be to collide with Linton and get my head crushed like an egg. So, with every muscle taut and ready, as the bucket came down I drove forward with all my weight behind my right fist—straight at the pit of that hairy stomach.

The wild yell of the maniac ended in a sick grunt as we went down in a floundering pile, the wild man beneath and Linton on my back. He had thrown himself forward under the bucket as I had done, and had taken the full force of the blow.

Devery showed no signs of being slow now. He pulled Linton to his feet, kicked the jangling bucket backward out of the cell, and when I got to my feet he had folded the cot up and in the space thus made stood over the madman with revolver drawn.

"Git up, ye brute!" he admonished, with a kick. But the man hadn't got his breath yet—to say nothing of his legs.

"Let that bed down again, Devery," said I, "and get him on it while I put another needle on this syringe; this one is broken." I stepped out to make room. They dragged the apparently helpless man on to the cot, placing him so that he lay on his side, face to the wall. Then Devery came out to let me into the narrow space, while Linton sat on the edge of the cot to hold the arm.

I plunged the needle quickly into the skin of the back, where I knew he could hardly feel it. Suddenly I felt the muscles under my hand spring taut as steel—the body whirled entirely over—and with a wild screech of "*Poisoned!*" the maniac was upon

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me again, and in his upraised hand, not a foot from my face, gleamed a *knife!*

Before I could move even a muscle Linton had hurled his body between us, clasping his left arm around the maniac's neck, while his right—I noticed with sick horror—hung limply by his side. The knife was buried in his back, and he rolled on the floor interlocked with the madman—under the cot!

With the dim light from the corridor shut out by Devery in the doorway, the space under the bed was dark. I tore wildly at the gas-pipe frame in a desperate attempt to fold it up—it was jammed!—while from the writhing mass below came now and then a hand upflung for a hold or a blow! Twice the hand with the knife rose and fell with a panting gasp—then the cot came loose out of the way and Devery got in a blow with his revolver-butt which stunned the beast and ended the struggle.

We dragged them out into the corridor. While Devery picked up the knife, hauled the unconscious man back into the cell and locked the door, I tore off Linton's shirt and with it stopped the flow of blood.

Linton's first anxious words were:

"Did he get you, Doctor? Did he?" He made a weak attempt to rise.

"*No!*" I blurted. "Lie still! You're hurt!"

"Then that's all right." He lay back with a sigh. When I had brushed the blur from my eyes he had quietly fainted.

CHAPTER XI

GOOD-BY, OLD MAN!

UP in hospital the Professor and Walsh were helping me dress Linton's wounds, while Radburn, Wheeler and the rest of the staff were listening to Devery's story. By the time the whisky had partly revived Linton, Devery had got to the knife episode.

"What the hell," interrupted Wheeler, "did you go to clinching and cat-wrestling with the brute for? Why didn't you hand him one under the ear and put him to sleep?'

"Can't you see?" I broke out. "Linton's collar-bone was broken by the bucket in the first mix-up! It was the bravest thing a man could do—to go under that knife to a clinch, with one arm disabled!"

Wheeler leaned over to hold an artery-clamp for me and whispered in my ear: "It's a bluff. Send the men to their beds." All the convalescents had crowded round. When they had gone, Wheeler said:

"I interrupted to prevent their hearing about the knife. Now I know what Mrs. Darcy and Schnitzer were hatching the other day. She put him up to tell the 'Gorilla' you were bound to poison him—you know that's his batty-spot, anyway—and to give him the knife. Nobody else has had a chance to do it."

"I suppose there's no use trying to do anything about it," I said.

"Not the least. Let them go, and keep it dark. They'll never try again." Then he turned to Linton, and in his face there was something that looked almost like affection as he sternly smiled:

"Well, Kid, you look as if you had been to a clam-bake of the Nth Ward."

"Anyhow, I didn't come back on my feet!" Linton grinned.

Linton grew steadily weaker, for he was bleeding inside, and in the evening I had to tell him that he had only a few hours more. He was perfectly satisfied and happy. He said he suffered no pain, and insisted that I must go to bed. About midnight I complied, leaving orders that I was to be called if there was any sudden change.

It was a beautiful Sunday morning when I awoke to the singing of birds outside my windows. Early Mass was being celebrated in the chapel, Radburn's clear baritone rising, full and sweet, above the voices of the choir, when word came that Linton had asked for me, charging them not to wake me if I were asleep.

As I sat down by his bed it was plain that he had not far to go. His face turned to me, now a clear boy-face—in it a devotion that was to me a reproach.

"Doctor," he whispered with an effort, "may I have something to brace me up—while I say—something?" His eyes closed. I gave him a stimulant and waited. As the fluttering pulse made its brief rally, he began again his labored whisper:

"I've been thinking—of things—when I was a kid. I don't remember any mother—my father was hard—inhuman and pious—I hated him and his religion—that's one reason—I went to hell!" His face clouded. "Then I couldn't get out—alone. You were the first—to help—I don't need to tell you—how I felt." The weakening whisper

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ceased and he seemed to be drifting. I could not see that he breathed. I took his hand, and he smiled.

"Thanks. That brought me back," the words were hardly audible. "I'm no preacher—I lost my chance to be—anything—but I am going—soon. If I must face another Court—I have one plea—that I saved a man—worth saving. I placed my last bet—on you. It's up to you—to make good—for both." Again the whisper died away; again his face cleared as the effort ceased; again the pulse ran low and stopped. After a little he opened eyes in which there was clear childlike trust. I bent to listen.

Faint but clear the murmur came:

"Well—good-by—old man—good luck!" There was a long, tremulous breath—ending in a faint rattle. The wax-white face showed no line of trouble.

On the dead quiet of the almost empty ward Radburn's voice was borne up from below:

"Kyrie Eleison! Christe Eleison!"

CHAPTER XII

A GRIM WARNING

IN THE dingy little office of the Penitentiary Hospital we were comfortably ruminant over after-dinner coffee and cigarettes, Dietmann, Radburn, Lawson and I.

"Well, Doctor,"—the fallen matinee-idol, Radburn, settled his nose-glasses on his English nose with a survival of his grand manner that went oddly with his uncouth clothes and cropped head—"it's a fortnight since the passing of the 'Kid'; and nobody has tried to stick a knife in you or pour oil of vitriol in your eyes. Time must hang heavy on your hands; what?"

It was like his British burliness to be the first to mention Kid Linton's heroic end, which had left us all in shadow.

"I'm not looking for trouble," I answered. "Moreover, the next time there might be nobody at hand willing to get between me and the knife."

"Unless it were Wheeler," said Lawson. "Now that he's rid the prison of the Head Matron and the Sheeny screw I don't see where you are to look for the next trouble."

"By Gad," Radburn leaned forward to thump the table with soft emphasis. "I'd be more afraid of Wheeler himself! He has all the attractiveness of a tiger, a rattler and the Devil himself. No wonder the crooks dodge if he looks at them!"

"I'd take my chances from a third-story window rather than face him when he's angry," said I. "But my faith in him is perfect. Yet I know no more about him—know him no better, than a month ago. For a week he has not spoken three words and he looks more savage than ever."

"I'll tell you the reason for that." Lawson looked as wise as a man could look when whispering across the table with a weather eye on the door. "It's being shut up with these common crooks. He's used to a life of wild excitement as well as the swellest luxuries of all kinds. He's a regular Beau Brummell as to his person—even in here you see how well-groomed he looks—and to be shut up with these greasy hoboes for weeks on end simply makes him savage."

"But you told me yourself that he has spent all he had when he came in—three hundred dollars—on the sick crooks in here," I advanced.

"And keeps it dark so that none of them will come near to thank him!"

Radburn, flicking the ashes from his cigarette, chanced to look up, and his wide-eyed stare turned us round in our chairs to face the door.

In the light from the lamp within stood the Danger incarnate, The eyes were fixed on me, and though more troubled than threatening, the ferocity of the man went through our group like an icy breeze.

As usual, he had paused on his bed-time pacing of the ward to look in on our nightly circle. For a few seconds only he absorbed the scene within, then moved noiselessly away.

It was after the morning round of the wards that I found the silent man reading my Hare's "Therapeutics" in the little office. As I entered from the women's ward through the heavily ironed door he rose respectfully as usual, but instead of stepping quickly through the opposite door he slanted a sharp look toward me. Seeing no busy preoccupation in my eye, he abruptly asked: "Is it true that —— and —— will kill the craving for booze?"

"In big doses they will."

"Are you game to try it to the limit?" still holding my eye steadily.

"Yes."

Another second of interrogation; he pressed his hard mouth a bit tighter and

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turned to leave. Before he had taken a step I said in a low tone:

"Darcy and his crowd have quit?" A question, but with no purpose except to serve as introduction for others. Therefore "Not! Still on the job!" was an unwelcome surprise. I sat down, feeling weak-kneed.

"How do you know?" I asked.

"There's a spy on the island—in the prison. For a week I've been trying to spot him."

So that was why he had been so fiercely uncompanionable!

"What is the game?"

"Waiting—watching for an excuse for putting you against the beak-bench bunch."

"For arresting me—getting me into court, do you mean?"

"He owns 'em. Just let him get you up once, no matter for what, and he'll get to you good!"

"Oh well, I shall not worry!—he won't get the chance."

Just then the Professor's huge mass appeared in the open doorway. He had a bottle in his hand and an innocent question in his eye. A glance from Wheeler sent him to the right-about, attempting to hum a careless refrain. His absurd effort not to show his fear of the famous man-killer was the more painfully funny because just now he was playing bad man himself. Just at present this delightful old Falstaff's rôle was his private personation of the great "Sled Wheeler," the terror of the police of two continents. It was disconcerting to confront the original.

When Wheeler turned to me there was a twist at the corners of his mouth that represented a smile. It vanished as he continued: "Don't get in wrong! You don't *have* to do anything. Ask Radburn!"

Abruptly stepping to the door, he called the actor with a peremptory jerk of his head. Radburn came, looking very serious.

"Just go over the legal points of your trials for the Doctor." Wheeler spoke with cool authority.

The actor was always ready with his grievances and began at once. If you read the papers at the time, you know (nothing at) all about the famous case that supplied the yellow press for months. At the top of his career Radburn had infuriated John Darcy by running away with and marrying his daughter. Darcy swore to land him in revenge. When the young couple had their first quarrel it was serious as such affairs go. In the debate Radburn dodged a soup-ladle and, seizing his lady by the shoulders, gave her an exasperated shake. She went to pa in tears. Radburn was arrested and tried for wife-beating. Followed delays, abuse, bullyragging and all the persecutions money and influence could secure. The papers reeked. After some weeks the actor was acquitted for lack of evidence, but the notice of acquittal was printed in small type on an obscure page.

Released and rearrested on a charge of bigamy, he was confronted by two street-women, imported from London for the purpose, who swore Radburn had married them. Again the yellow jackal chorus; again the acquittal for lack of evidence; again the notice of acquittal was discreetly hidden.

As soon as he was free he was arrested for the third time. Some slight contradiction in testimony was fished out of the records of the preceding trials; the actor was convicted and given the limit sentence for *perjury!* He went to prison an utterly ruined man. No manager would ever engage him again on any terms. The paper-reading public still believes him guilty of wife-beating, bigamy and all unnameable horrors.

As Wheeler walked from the office with the smooth gliding step of an athlete, he said to me over his shoulder: "Think it over!"

No deep thought was needed. The actor's story plainly showed the persistent malignancy of the man who was now on my trail. What was more alarming was the evidence that he could both furnish the offense and dictate the sentence.

My dreams were troubled that night, but the events of the next day drove my danger from my mind.

CHAPTER XIII

THE WARDEN

ALL this time I had never seen the Warden. Somewhere on Olympian heights I knew he lived and ruled the prison through his vice-agent, Deputy Warden Mangan. Crooks and screws alike looked upon "the Old Man" with superstitious awe and affection. He was "the greatest living criminologist"; "dead square, and the whitest man living"; "one of the Four Hundred—has been a high-roller in his day,"—accord-

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ing to one's varied informants. It was whispered that he had been drinking heavily since the death of his wife two years before. This was denied, and he was said to be about to marry his second cousin, Mrs. Archer, who had managed his house since the Head Matron had left.

Lawson had informed me that the Warden had not looked with favor upon my predecessors in office and that he had never spoken to one of them. Therefore I received his summons with misgivings and at once thought of the Exhorters.

The Exhorters were not loving me overmuch because I had not encouraged their visits to the ward. The brazen voice of the square-jawed maiden-lady who led them—together with her promises of certain Hell and Torment—had so rasped the nerves of my patients that I had instructed Riley to ask them to come another day whenever a bad case was in the ward. They had protested spitefully.

In the highly finished office there rose to meet me a grizzled gentleman of the old school, so like a fine old great-uncle of mine that I stared stupidly. His voice was low and pleasant: "Doctor, we have been hearing great things about you; and it's high time we met. Pardon me, you recall some one——" holding my hand and searching my face.

"*You* remind me of my great-uncle, General Wylie——"

"That's it! You're the living image of him at your age." He resumed shaking my hand in delight. "Why, my boy, Dick Wylie was the idol of my boyhood! You could have no better blood in your veins—could pay me no higher compliment. Well—well! we must lose no more time in getting acquainted. I was going to ask you to call at the house professionally to-morrow, but unless you have another engagement you must come to dinner to-night, at seven. There'll be only the family."

It was one of the few times when at first sight one feels the pull of the clan-bond, destined to outlast friendship or passion, that stress only clinches the tighter. When I left I carried within me that deeply comfortable sense of being at home at last, which makes a home of any place.

And yet there had been a tremor in the Warden's muscles that was not from age, a nervous unrest that had but one meaning. In connection with Wheeler's questions in therapeutics it left little doubt as to the nature of the professional call of the morrow.

Thanks to the prison "telegraph" after lunch I found my hospital staff as proudly elate over my invitation to dinner at the "Big House" as I was.

Wheeler gave no sign of interest until I came up to the office to report to Radburn for final "dress" inspection. Suddenly the great crook stepped lithely between us and took possession of me without a word. The look in the cold, greenish eyes no man could interpret. After a swift, appraising glance he murmured as if to himself: "Your tie's too straight."

He pulled it a hair's breath, with a touch like a zephyr, meanwhile continuing the murmur that I alone could hear: "Pay no attention to their fool talk. Remember that they are coming to *you* for help. You're asking no odds of them."

The man was an enigma. One more keenly comprehensive look and he said aloud: "Now you're all right—go *to* it!"

The dinner was served in a lofty banqueting-hall with high-arched ceiling; at one end a huge fire-place held a glorious fire, with fore- and back-log; and the family made me feel they were in earnest in declaring that hereafter this was to be my home on the island. But the prospect that turned my head with delight was the thought of the library I had seen on entering—and the nearer acquaintance of Miss Archer!

She was Mrs. Archer's daughter, eighteen—there is no room here; she must be left for other pages. But she is the reason why I can recall almost nothing of the talk at table. I remember only her first remark:

"You have lots of loyal admirers among the prisoners, Doctor. But don't you find work among the prisoners very depressing?"

"No, not a bit. They are more appreciative than many more fortunate. I find the work fascinating beyond everything."

"That's because you treat them right and bring out the best in them," said the Warden.

"I have thought at times that they bring out the best in me," I answered.

"If it only had that effect on me!" said the Warden, as to himself.

The bitterness of his tone made the others look up with apprehension. The skeleton had rattled.

Until dinner was over the talk was sustained with an effort. After dessert the

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Warden went to his room, pleading illness; the elderly sister followed and soon I was left in the library with Mrs. Archer. Her daughter, in the adjoining music-room, played softly while we were talking.

Never since then has a family tragedy taken so strong a hold on me. The genuine kindness of their hospitality; my sympathy for the Warden; the evident suffering of the woman who told me with tears in her kind eyes; the melody of Shubert's "Serenade" coming through the open door—all helped in stirring me to a depth that was painful.

"To think that such a man can be ruined by a foul tongue!" she buried her face in hands that trembled in spite of her. "Such a rare gentleman, and the foremost criminologist of his time! But misfortune has been so exaggerated and distorted that, if he can not meet some men in town next week and be himself in every way, it will mean ruin!" She could control herself no longer. "I don't know that you—anybody—can help. I don't know what to do! We were advised to ask you— But I can't see——"

"Is it beyond his control?"

"There are times—one of those periods is coming on now—when he must drink, and drink heavily, or he is nothing but a nervous wreck—can only lie in bed and suffer. He is a man of tremendous will and can stop all—all stimulants at once; but if he does he can not hope to do anything for several days. Then it will be too late. He will not only have to resign at once—he intended to leave here in the Spring anyway—but he will lose the splendid position in the West that has been offered him. It will be the end of everything!"

"Would he let me manage the case?"

Something in my tone made her look up quickly. "Yes. Indeed, I *know* he would. What do you mean?"

"There's a fair chance that I can help him. There are drugs that will put a man in that condition on his feet and tide him over his attack, so that he can appear himself. Afterward the habit can be dealt with—for good. But the things must be given in immense doses—larger than are considered safe. At such times, however, I am satisfied that they *are* safe."

She stared as if at a ghost. When she spoke it was in a hushed whisper:

"You—you wouldn't deceive me in this? Pardon me—I can't make it seem real."

While I went over it slowly, her tense muscles relaxed; the staring eyes filled; she threw herself on the couch, burying her face in the pillows to stifle her sobs. Like all men since Adam, I felt like a fool. But it was an April shower, and later, when she came back from seeing the Warden, to report that he was ready to put himself in my hands absolutely, her face was shining. I told her that was reward enough. But it was a look from another pair of long-lashed eyes that I took back with me to my little room in the prison.

CHAPTER XIV

THE NET CLOSES

AT BREAKFAST the next morning a message came from the "Big House" asking me to come as soon as possible. The Dep. in person brought it to me and he looked very serious. He was a man of few words and his manner was sheepish as he hoped I "could help the Old Man."

In a luxurious bedroom the Warden tossed on a canopied bed—clearly on the verge of tremens, but holding on with a heroic effort.

"Doctor, this is big business for a grown man—fighting a fear of nothing!" He held out a trembling hand.

"It's only a symptom—and one that can be stopped."

"Stopped!" He jumped up. "Stopped *when?* Stopped how soon? They've been knifing me already in town. Unless I can see the Commissioner in town this afternoon, they can drag the river for me to-morrow!"

It was the first time I had ever heard it said in earnest and it shook me up.

"I mean that I can fix you so that you can do whatever you wish at three this afternoon, if only you will come back at six for another hyp. Then we will begin the regular treatment in the morning."

He stared blankly. "You'll—you will—would you mind saying that again? I have thought I heard so many things—in the last few hours—I'm not sure of anything."

"I can put you on your feet for three hours, if you——"

"Then, for God's sake, don't wait another minute!"

"If you will only follow my directions afterward," I finished.

"I'll do anything you say—only don't keep me waiting!"

I rang for boiled water to fix a hypoder-

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mic; but in order to keep my hand steady while I fixed it I had to turn away from the man's painfully tremulous suspense. I gave him the immense doses of stimulants without hesitation, told him to close his eyes and lie still until I spoke to him and for twenty minutes I watched beside him.

"Now you can get up and dress," I said finally.

He sat up and blinked at me. The tremor was gone from his muscles, the fear from his eyes. He reached for dressing-gown and slippers and swung his feet off the bed. When he stood steadily he stretched out his fingers, worked them tentatively and turned to me in astonishment.

"I believe you've done it!" he spoke half-unbelieving. Then his face lightened. "Great guns, boy, I never felt anything like it! How long will this last? Why don't the big men of your profession know about this?"

"It will last about three hours. By that time you will be back and I can fix you up for the night. Will that do?"

"Will it do? My dear boy——" He reached for my hand: "There is no use in thanking you in words. I shall not try. When it's all over we'll see about it. Wait! Mrs. Archer will want to——"

"Then I'll see you at six." And I ran away from embarrassing thanks.

In the Winter sunlight the world was a good old place to live in. I wanted to hear what Wheeler would say about the case, but I was disappointed, for, after sick-line and lunch, I found it was the Sisters' afternoon to visit the ward.

These lovely women, in contrast to the Exhorters, always chose times when the ward was quiet, so I rarely saw them except as I passed through. But I always saw their wake left in the faces of the men. I have seen the men keep fruit until it was past eating—as a reminder of their visits; and all looked for their coming eagerly.

This afternoon when I came into the ward I found Wheeler and Sister Mary talking earnestly. She was the leader of the Sisters; a beautiful woman, full of pure hopeful love and sympathy, and her presence was like sunshine in the ward. It was not the first time I had seen these two talking, and their understanding seemed perfect.

The afternoon passed quickly in reading, and at six the Warden came back triumphant and hopeful. All had gone well for him and he was ready to begin treatment the next morning in my new private ward.

The great crook said nothing to me until a half-hour before the Warden was due. Wheeler sat just outside the door of the little office, a newspaper hiding his face. A strange man sat on the hobo's bench opposite. As I passed him Wheeler growled, so low that only I could hear:

"Don't look at me. They're on. Watch out!"

I turned toward the window and looked out, hands in my pockets, close to his elbow. "Who's on to what? Where?"

"There are two 'plain-clothes' downstairs, one at each door. I've nailed the 'shadow' at last—it's the new matron on the other side—think she's from the Central Office. And that nurse over there is another, for money."

The new matron I had barely noticed; only she seemed too young and pretty for the position. The freckled stranger with large ears was the nurse the Warden had engaged. His looks were not all one could wish.

"We can get another nurse," I murmured.

"They'd know we were on—and work something harder. This is easy. But you'd better put off the Warden's case for a day or two. If you make any mistake—no matter how little, hell will be out for noon!"

"Not a minute to lose. Besides—I shall make no mistakes."

"Good stuff! *Go* to it!"

I stretched and yawned as if I had been dozing, and turned to approach the nurse. He was staring at Wheeler's legs and newspaper—all he could see of him—with terrified awe. He tore himself loose with an effort.

"Are you the nurse from the City Hospital?"

"Ye—yes." He jumped at the rustle of Wheeler's paper.

"Then come this way, please."

He walked as far from Wheeler as possible in passing him and followed me into the new ward. While he was making things ready under my directions I noticed that he watched the windows closely. While my back was turned (so that I could see him through a mirror over the bed) he dipped one of the shades three times at each window. At the next opportunity I saw that one of the plain-clothes was in sight below.

A few minutes before the Warden was due,

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I told the nurse to put him to bed as soon as he came and call me from the other side. Then I went to hear what the men had to say about it, for I knew that my staff was wildly excited and anxious by this time. Riley, his forehead all puckered with worriment, whispered: "Are you going ahead with it, Doctor?"

"What has got you going?" I said.

"Oh, I don't know, but there's somethin' doin' that ain't right—two plain-clothes down-stairs, at both doors—Dep.'s been up twice to talk to Dan. If Wheeler don't croak somebody before night, I lose. I never *see* him 'n such a hell-of-a-scrunch's he's been in all day!"

"Where is he?"

"Here." In the open door of the ward he stood with arms folded, like the villain in a play. But there never trod the stage a villain with half the malign potency of his glittering eyes, half the radiant energy of his graceful figure.

It was through me that his look was boring. In spite of the always sarcastic twist of lips that mocked my weakness, something in his presence roused and steadied me. At the time I took it for resentment.

"Doctor, your patient's ready," from the door behind me, startled all of us.

I realized how much depended on the outcome—that the future of at least three people was at stake, but I could not feel anxious. I needed the lesson that was waiting for me!

Taking the chair by the bed, I took the Warden's wrist: "You have a good pulse this morning."

"I am feeling fine—effect of mind over body. I have cast off all worry and responsibility; it all rests with you." He looked up with a smile that was almost happy.

"That is the right spirit. You will help most in that way. Professor!" He was behind my chair in a second.

"Fill this hypodermic," I gave the formula for a strong heart-stimulant including 1–120 gr. of atropin.

"Very well, Doctor! Is that all, Doctor?" This in his most impressive ceremonious bass, thinking of the impression he was making on our distinguished patient.

"Yes. Hurry up!"

In a moment he was back with a filled hyp. and a small bottle of dark blue glass. I can see that bottle now! The label lies before me. Coming close and bending over me, he whispered with great show of secrecy, "Atropin solution not concentrated enough for a hyp. Give it *per os*?"

"Yes. Give me the bottle." I took it from him hastily and went to the window to get a better light. I noticed as I poured out a dram that the man on watch below was still there. Well, we should fool him.

"Isn't that a big dose?" It was the Professor whispering in my ear, still bent on impressing.

"A sixteenth of a grain to the ounce," I read from the label. "A dram would contain one one-hundred-and-twentieth—a full dose, but not unusual." He subsided and I hadn't the heart to sit on him more heavily for his officiousness. I gave the draught and the hyp.; sat by the bed for a few minutes to see that the heart responded well—which it did; gave some directions for the next hour, and went down to sick-line, Dietmann taking the place of the Professor at the drug-desk, the latter being needed upstairs.

The sick-line was short and I had started for my dining-room when old Kinney answered the whistle of the speaking-tube.

"Hurry-call t' the hospital!"

CHAPTER XV

THE MISPLACED DOT

IN THE door at the top of the long flights of iron stairs I ran into Riley, pop-eyed and shivering:

"D-doctor! W-warden's unconscious! Nurse says——"

I pushed past him, past the Professor whose pasty-gray face was a blank; Radburn, pale and sympathetic, held open the door from the office to the small ward.

There, on the bed— If it had been my own father the shock could have been no worse! The trembling nurse was holding up the head and rattling the edge of a glass against the teeth in frantic, futile effort to get him to swallow. Face purple-flushed and expressionless, eyes glassy-black and staring, twitching lips flecked with foam; the man on the bed raved guttural incoherences and struggled to escape.

One look at the wide-stretched pupils; one touch of the rapidly bounding pulse—the label on the blue bottle sprang before my eyes as if shown by a lightning-flash:

Atropin Sulf. gr. $\frac{1}{xvi}$ — fl 1

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The mark above the line was the misplaced dot of the i below! Sixteen grains instead of one-sixteenth! I had given two-hundred-and-fifty-six times the full dose of the deadly poison!

I felt a sensation as if I had been kicked in the pit of the stomach. Toxicologies said that no man had been saved who had taken a grain and a half. I had given the man, whom of all men I wanted to save, two full grains on an empty stomach an hour ago! It was already beyond reach of the tube—the Warden was as good as dead! *And I had done it!*

As a drowning man sees his life's panorama in an instant, the whole situation flashed before me. Outside were men watching for just such a chance, and I knew the nature of the man who sent them. "If they can once get you in court, hell will be out for noon!"

Things began to turn black and close in on me. With a wrenching, brute effort I pulled myself out, and that brought reaction. Could a speck on a paper crush the combined strength of many men? Because a fool drug-orderly had misplaced a dot I had killed a good man, spoiled the life of at least one woman and sent myself to prison! For the first time I noticed the pale and helpless faces around me—they too were in league with the brutish universe that had tricked me! With a rush of blood and a ringing in the ears there surged up in me a fighting berserk rage, a rage at Fate and the Laws of Things!

It is hard to believe, but they all tell me that I had hardly touched the pulse when I began to shout orders: "Riley! Get the stomach-tube for the nurse—then send to the City Hospital for their battery! Professor, bring the nitroglycerin and strychnin solutions—ether and ammonia—sterilize extra needles and all the hyps. in the hospital! Move! *Move!* MOVE! *Are you all dead?*"

The face on the bed was already a horrible gibbering mask, becoming every moment more inhuman and senseless. The men acted as if benumbed by terror, doddering about their tasks and dropping things. I began to use language: "Come, get together! Nurse, pass that tube while I fill the hyps. Professor, *wake up!* Hand me that syringe and hold this bottle! Riley, —— you, don't stare like a stuck pig! Get off that message to the hospital and phone to Dr. R. in town! *Get out!*"

It seemed as if things moved with geologic slowness, but at last they did move.

Washing the stomach was an empty form, but no chance could be missed. When this was finished, the breathing was so slow and stertorous that I gave three large hyps. in succession, recorded the time and amount of each, and sat down by the bed to hold the pulse and watch the respirations.

If anything about that day's fatal doings is an object of pride, it is that the bedside notes—which lie before me now—are clearly written.

Now that I could look about me I could see that not a soul but me had any suspicion of the cause of the trouble; they saw that the man was dying, but thought it something like apoplexy. The nurse was fidgeting about the bed, plainly at a loss as to what signals to give his accomplices below, now and then glancing toward the window. The Professor watched me appealingly, his fat face like a huge baby about to cry.

"Fix some more of that solution and fill this hyp.! Keep moving!"

Again and again I plunged the needle into the muscles of the arms and chest. For a few minutes the strychnin seemed to spur the failing respirations; then they would fail once more, each time getting more feeble. The face became more and more bloated, the muscles relaxed, and within an hour the body lay inert, while though the open mouth the heavy breaths came ever more slowly.

The Professor broke down and whined: "For God's sake, what's the matter, Doctor? What's killing him?"

"Atropin!" I snapped savagely. "He has taken two grains, and the record, with recovery, is one-and-a-half!"

The weakness of my staff was exasperating, or I should not have rubbed it in so hard.

"Then he can't live an hour—and we'll all go up the river!" he bellowed outright.

"*You*'ll go anyhow, you yap!" came from behind him. The vicious thrill in the hissing words froze the miserable wretch dumb; he stared at Wheeler with chattering teeth.

"You're the drug-orderly—you fat dub! If any mistake has been made, it's up to you. You for a lifer!"

The abject, debasing fear in the fat face was indecent to look at!

"What's he done?" It was the Deputy

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Warden's voice that startled us all, as he stepped through the door.

"Nothing," I said, as I turned to give another hyp. "I gave the stuff and made the mistake."

At the sound of throaty sobs I turned to see the Professor leaning against the doorpost with face buried on his arm, blubbering like a great school-boy. Wheeler looked at me—just one cutting, sneering frown; then clutched the soft arm in a grip that fetched a moan of pain. "Choke off!" he gritted. "Whisper a word to any one, and I'll eat your heart alive! *You know me!*" As he ground out the last words into the wet flabby face with a venom that stopped his victim's breath, he whirled him about, thrust him through the door so violently that he plunged heavily headlong, and slammed the door upon his ponderous fall. Then he turned his flashing, amber eyes on the Deputy Warden. Mangan was no coward, but he shrank from that look.

"Are you going to see him—" (jerk of the head toward me) "—get the worst of it from that bunch?"

"I'll do what I can, but you know what he's up against." He looked at the nurse, then turned and whispered to me: "For God's sake, Doc, keep dark what killed him! They'll make it life for you and anybody mixed in it, if they get next! Can I do anything for you?"

"'Phone Dr. R. and get me some pilocarpin from the City Hospital!"

I did not look up from my work. The Dep. hurried out; and the room was quiet. Thinking that Riley must have run away, I happened to look up for the nurse. He stood near the foot of the bed, holding tight to a chair-back, gazing at Wheeler, hypnotized with terror.

"Throw some ether on the chest!" I said sharply, to rouse him.

"It's abusing a corpse!" he shrieked. "I won't do it!" Breaking loose with an effort, he rushed toward the window.

With one smooth movement Wheeler tripped him and sprang on his back, pressing his thumbs somewhere into the man's neck below the ears. There were a few heaving struggles, a gasping, indrawn croak, and the nurse lay a crumpled heap, apparently dead. On looking close his sides could be seen to move in weak breathing. Wheeler rose gracefully and wiped his hands on a snow-white handkerchief.

"He'll not speak for three hours," he said coolly. Turning to me he stood for a few seconds quietly watching as I made a note of the last injection. Then he spoke with cutting irony: "Now may I ask why you have landed yourself for life? They didn't want that fat slob and he could have been got off with a short bit. But they will—What do you intend to do?"

"Play the game out," I said sullenly, but I did not look up at him. After some time I began to talk, half to myself: "It kills by stopping the breathing. The heart will go as long as it has aired blood. If the breathing is kept going until the poison is eliminated— But it's impossible, even with a grain-and-a-half, and he has two full grains in his blood right now! It can't be done—But it's got to be done, it's—got—to—be—done!"

Alone under the crushing weight of the guilt and danger, the hopeless, horrible outlook was slowly but relentlessly strangling me. And now came the last twist of the screw—and it was like a blow in the face! *I could not even plead the excuse of a wrong label!* The very reason why Roman numerals are used in pharmacy is to prevent such mistakes—to indicate whole units. If a fraction had been intended, the Arabic figures 1–16 would have been used. I hope never to pass such another minute as the one following the realization of this dry fact! There was no excuse for such a stupid mistake. If I had not been so small-souled and spiteful when the Professor had asked me if it were not a large dose; if I had not been so intent upon hurting his feelings and ridiculing his poor innocent pretense, I should not have killed this man! I would not wish my worst enemy such torture.

CHAPTER XVI

THE FIGHT FOR A LIFE

FOR an hour I worked alone—and aged a century. I saw nothing but the unconscious form, heard nothing but the failing breathing. All the time black despair was settling—— What was that?

The breathing had stopped!

A long silence—cold sweat broke out on my face as I listened, sick—so sick! At last a long inspiration, and I breathed again. I must start artificial respiration and I needed help! Fright had paralyzed Riley and the

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Professor; the nurse had been ju-jitsued. Nobody ever thought of asking Wheeler to do anything with those handsome, deadly hands. One would as soon try to harness a wild panther to a pony-cart. "Certainly," I said, as if he had just spoken, "there's only one thing left to do—put up a good fight."

I began to work the arms when there was a pause in the breathing, as in reviving a drowning man. I don't know how long it was, but I was beginning to feel muscular fatigue when I was conscious of relief. I found I was sitting in the chair and Wheeler was at the arms, his face the same contemptuous mask!

"See here," said I, "you must keep out of this! You'll be landed for complicity. They're after you, too. I have given enough strychnin to kill ten men and, with your record and the influence against you, they could land *you* for life!"

No man ever lived to whom confinement was more fatal—it was the only thing he feared, and I knew it.

"You will go up for life—and you won't help me a bit!" I added.

"Think you're going to have all the fun of this scrap?" He gave the twist to his cruel lips that I had learned to take for a smile, and again applied himself to the business of keeping the Warden breathing.

The bedside notes show that artificial respiration began at about four o'clock, or more than four hours after the poison was taken. So it must have been about then that Wheeler took a hand. Still the effects of the atropin were on the increase. The nerve terminals in the throat were so dead that even pure whisky poured in the mouth was inhaled, and bubbled in the lungs without an expulsive effort. In this way some minutes were lost, turning the patient over the edge of the bed to empty the bronchial tubes.

The minutes dragged into hours, the hours into eternities. Radburn, who had been hovering outside, asked to come in and help. Wheeler broke a long silence to tell him to take the paralyzed nurse outside and leave him in the care of Walsh with instructions not to let him speak. Still the gruelling work went on. Larger and more frequent hypodermics were needed in addition to the artificial respiration to keep the heart going. When the breathing was allowed to cease even for a few seconds only, the pulse ran dangerously low.

As night fell and the lights were turned on, the bell rang for the change of guards at six o'clock. With the night shift, Lawson took the place of Riley in the men's ward, and I could hear him asking for details of the disaster. Moreover, in the confusion of the change, there was a leak somewhere. The plain-clothes got wind of the situation and in less than ten minutes there was an altercation going on in the office. Lawson was no fighter, the door flew open and in rushed one of the plain-clothes, much out of breath. At sight of Wheeler, however, he stopped and his mouth fell open:

"Dan! W-what——?"

"Good evening! In a hurry, Jake?" The modulation of the cracksman's tones was perfect, though the sweat was running in his eyes.

"Beg your pardon, Dan—I didn't know—I'll get out now, if you will give me your word——"

"Couldn't think of it—wouldn't be hospitable. Sit down and see something worth seeing. For *your* sake, Jake, I hope this comes out right!" He smiled sweetly and the man went pale. "You see, I might as well have two indictments against me as one, and I take no chances on your hollering, son!"

The man sat down. His face wore the same greenish pallor and hopeless certainty of death that I had seen twice before. But, headed for life-imprisonment myself, it all seemed, as a dramatic critic might say, *unconvincing*. I seemed to feel nothing but a tired, sullen, fighting rage. Words and images meant nothing. Another hour dragged out—I asked what had been the outcome of the messages to the City Hospital and to Dr. R.

"I forgot——" said the inefficient little Lawson, pale and stammering. He seemed afraid he would be dragged into danger himself. "Riley told me Dr. R. was out of town—so is Dr. G. The drug-room at the hospital is closed and the druggist gone to town."

"That settles it!" said I aloud. "Our only hope was in the pilocarpin—and it will be too late by the time we can get it from town!"

Soon after that, when Wheeler was working his turn at the arms, he said, so low that the man at the other side of the room could not hear: "Put your ear to the chest!"

When I had done so, with head down so his lips could not be seen, he could whisper

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in my other ear: "Hold still! I sent word two hours ago; by this time there is a man at the lower landing in a rowboat. You've done all a man can do. Make some excuse —go to Mrs. Rafferty, the matron downstairs in the women's corridor, and tell her to let you out the little door from the isolated corridor. It is blind outside, and nobody watching it. Say to the man with the boat—'Sled sent me.' He will get you out of the city inside an hour. You can make your get-away."

All this in a monotonous whisper—utterly lacking in dramatic effect! On the stage it would not get a hand. But he was giving more than his life for mine!

If he helped me out, he would make my enemies his; and with his record, this job would be absolutely certain to put him away for life. For one of his wildly high-strung temperament *that* meant lingering death—a thing he feared as he feared nothing else on earth or in heaven or hell.

"How about you?" I said at the risk of being heard.

"It's all behind me—it's ahead of you. Beat it!"

"I will!"

I stood up and said aloud: "We must have some pilocarpin. I am going to the City Hospital to get it."

Putting on my coat, I stopped to listen to the heart once more.

With head on the Warden's chest, I whispered: "Promise to keep up this respiration for forty minutes."

"But you will be off the island in ten."

"Promise—or I don't go!"

"Forty it is—good luck!" He gave me the superstitious "lucky touch" on the back as I got up.

From the door I looked back. The man in the corner still sat with eyes glued on Wheeler. The great crook looked up at me, and in his glance I thought there was an added shade of contempt. It hurt, but here was my chance! I carried away the picture of him at the slow lifting of the arms. A friend is a good thing to have after all.

CHAPTER XVII

"A HEADACHE—WATER"

THE new matron looked up curiously as I went through the woman's ward, and responded cheerfully to my good-night as I hurried to the stairs. Down the three flights of iron steps—Mrs. Rafferty looked at me as if I were a ghost, or already a criminal.

"The blind door in the isolated corridor—Quick!"

Her face lighted at once as she went for the keys. Bless her heart! She was afraid *for* me, not *of* me!

There was a hint of Spring in the night air, and I thought of the sap rising in the trees of the Vermont woods as I ran through the slush, filling my lungs with the salt breeze.

Some of my former staff-mates were still in the big hospital. As I ran up the familiar stairs I collided with Livingstone.

"The keys of the drug-room! In a hurry!"

"Meet you there!" He knew better than to ask questions.

I ran down again, beating him to the small basement room by a second or two. He helped me find the solution.

"Uremic coma?" he asked as I started off.

"Something like it."

Again I filled my lungs with the free air —for the last time?—and was soon at the blind door.

No answer! Why had I failed to tell her to be on the watch? If I made too much noise the man on guard at the front door would hear. Two more attempts, and I stole cautiously to the corner. The man must have been driven in to get warm, for all was clear in front.

Stealthily I gained the window near the table where the matron usually sat reading. I pulled myself up by my hands on the stone sill until I could see inside; then dropped quickly—the new matron!

They had changed places. This one would not let me in, even if she knew about the door!

A sound behind— A blinding flash!

There was a heavy pain at the back of my head—fireworks in front—roaring in my ears. A dash of cold water in my face made me gasp.

"He's coming around. Let him alone!" in a strange man's voice.

I knew I was lying on a stone floor—in the prison corridor probably. Somebody let my head gently down—the pain was worse, but the fireworks were fading, and a woman's voice, the new matron's, said: "Are you sure you're in right?"

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"Sure! I got orders to put the bracelets on the Doctor the first crack after anybody croaked up there. Got signal long ago that somebody was dyin'. He was tryin' to make his get-away when I rapped his nut."

My eyes came open of themselves. The little alarm-clock on the table said eight-thirty—ten minutes more before Wheeler would stop pumping. If I should not get there before then—prison for all of us!

It was hard getting up, handcuffed and dizzy, and the pain increased.

"Nobody's dead yet. But if I don't get up there in ten minutes, he will be dead! And you will have some explaining to do!" My voice sounded far away. I staggered and collapsed on a chair the woman pushed under me.

"Don't you worry about me, son. Save it all for yourself—you'll soon be where you can't do any damage!" His growl was not ill-natured.

"I can promise you that you'll have Sled Wheeler on your trail, if you kill the man upstairs by keeping me here!" Desperate, I tried to terrify him by the bogy that frightened the others.

He actually jumped, but recovered: "That bluff's as good as any other—but it don't work!" He turned to the woman as he spoke. She seemed doubtful—was eyeing me closely.

"*You* know whether I'm a liar or not," I appealed to her hopelessly. "Tell him whether I am telling the truth or not, if you're a woman!"

Still holding my eyes steadily, she spoke to him slowly and distinctly, while I was in an agony of impatience over the passing minutes that were ticking away our lives: "I think they have got us in wrong—all of us, Jim. I only got next yesterday. This man has got a game that's too deep for me—or else he's dead square. I don't know which. I think——"—a long pause, in which my heart thumped painfully. "Anyway, he's got Sled Wheeler so he eats out of his hand—and you know *him!* I think you'd better take off the bracelets, Jim."

"You're the boss," he spoke sullenly. "But who put you next?"

"All the women, and—" in the pause she took her eyes from me and turned to him, "Sister Mary!" she finished in a lower tone.

When the handcuffs dropped from my wrists and I stood free the relief brought the weakness of relaxation. My knees shook and I staggered.

"I tell you he's bluffing!" the man shouted, and again snapped the iron on one wrist and seized the other.

I tore it free—five minutes to spare!—I saw the clock as we struggled. The man's panting face was near to mine. Weak from the cut scalp and loss of blood, I was failing. Wheeler's trick came to me—viciously I jabbed two fingers of my free hand into the eyes so near to mine! With a scream of pain the man fell back, grimacing in agony. I reeled toward the foot of the stairs. As I climbed painfully upward I heard the woman saying: "Hold still! You'll be all right in a minute. You got what was coming to you. It's lucky for you that you did."

Up-stairs there was no time to listen to Miss Rafferty's explanations or to wait to be fixed up, as she begged me to do. She unlocked the door to the room, and I saw Wheeler was still at his post!

The face he turned to me seemed years older, but the years fell away. Then he rushed to catch me:

"Who did this? Wasn't the man there with the boat? Somebody will sweat for this!"

By this time his delicate touch had found that the cut was nothing. Like lightning he bound it tight with his handkerchief, meanwhile repeating in eager undertone: "Wasn't he there?"

Radburn had taken his turn at the arms, so I turned to the cracksman: "I didn't go to see. I got this," holding up the bottle of pilocarpin from my pocket. "I told you I'd 'beat it'! We've got to *beat that poison record*, and it's time we were at it!"

By this time I was filling a hyp. with the new solution, but before I inserted the needle Wheeler's behavior stopped me.

He seemed to swell until he stood inches taller and I thought the rap on the head had queered my eyes. He filled his chest, looking at me with eyes that had a wild light; then turned up a face that was set in a sort of frenzy:

"Now,"—his voice was deep and tremulous, "if there's a Power anywhere that interferes with things, now's the time to get busy!"

If it was a prayer, it was the only one from those lips, which now set in a fearsome, grim determination.

As we bent again to our hopeless task, it is impossible to give an idea of the man's power. Sternly, steadily, evenly, with face

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set in adamant purpose, he wrought like nothing but a huge silent engine. You have seen them, monsters of power, as in the clean sanctity of their inviolate temples they work noiseless and resistless, with no hint of jar or effort, heaving their thousands of tons at every smooth stroke, back and forth, back and forth, their still, majestic might hushes man in his puny strength to breathless awe. That was Wheeler as he was that night—set like flint, with a cruel, tireless force in reserve, merciless as sea or storm in elemental fury. One felt he would crush anything that came between him and his immovable purpose.

Together and by turns we worked through the long hours.

Nine—ten—eleven o'clock passed. Radburn had weakened and dropped asleep, as had the plain-clothes man. Still no change—no hope of change, in sight. Every two hours Lawson brought us strong coffee to keep us awake, and it renewed our strength as nothing else. Still the pumping at the arms—still the huge hyps. of heart-stimulants and pilocarpin.

The face was fading and the eyeballs were fishy, but the heart was beating. Again we went at it with renewed strength and vicious striving. Pilocarpin—whisky—ether—strychnin by syringe-needle, ether on the chest—massage to muscles of respiration, alternating with the electric current. But still there were no respirations except those we made.

There were times when we gave the injections as fast as we could fill the syringe. I thought I had known what it was to have efficient help before—but Wheeler seemed to redouble my own strength and add his own to it. As we worked together, as the task seemed more endlessly hopeless, there roused in us a dangerous smoldering anger. With perfect understanding, like two men fused in one, with superhuman will and four hands to execute it, we strained every tissue of our bodies and minds. The interminable, impossible nature of the thing increased our vindictive exasperation steadily until it became a veritable prolonged ecstasy of hopeless fury, a very frenzy of everlasting savage determination.

Midnight—one—two o'clock passed; we were no further advanced, no less determined. As there had been no beginning to this cycle of fiendish striving, within memory, so there was no end conceivable. It was the darkness and eternal torment of hell made real and present.

A little after two I thought I saw some effect from the last dose of pilocarpin. By three o'clock I was sure of it. But now the heart was weakening. A large part of the atropin was out of the blood, but the vital forces themselves were yielding to the prolonged strain and the accumulation of poisons. Spontaneous respirations were noticeable, though very feeble, but unless the man could be roused to a voluntary effort, he would die, and die soon. Wheeler was taking his turn at rest. I dragged him to his feet: "Dan, the atropin is weakening, and so is the heart. It will be all over in five minutes unless he can be roused!"

Everything was put in the hyp. that could stimulate, all in limit dosage—and I gave it. Wheeler worked the arms while I kneaded the trunk-muscles, set the battery going at them, dashed water in the face, ether on the chest; then, one on each side, we took a hand and shook his shoulders as we raised the head. I shouted in the deaf ears:

"Warden! Mr. Washburn! Help! Fight! Wake up! *How do you feel?*" I remember the words, senseless as they seemed, and it was the last——

It seemed years that we strained over the bed, waiting and listening. The dry mouth twitched! A hoarse voice somewhere said: "A headache—water!"

Fourteen hours since he had become unconscious—and such a fourteen hours!

Dimly I saw somebody pumping away at my hands, clapping me on the back while I heard Radburn's voice in hysterical and awful profanity and then:

"It beats any fight I ever saw—or ever expect to see! You've won! Do you hear, you old lobster? You've *won!*"

I saw Wheeler reach out a hand in congratulation and fall across the bed exhausted. Then all turned dark entirely.

CHAPTER XVIII

WHICH IS VERY SHORT

THE less said about the next few days the better. Such fussing and coddling—as if I had earned a V. C.! And I had only undone—and by a narrow margin—the damage resulting from my own stupidity! The plain-clothes men, when I came to, had vanished

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into thin air, never to be seen more. I do not know who called them off, but Sister Mary was very near to the Darcy family; you can draw your own conclusions. It was a strange mix-up all round, such as occurs only in real life.

When I came to my senses after the Warden had complained of a "headache"—the most welcome word I ever heard!—and when I had given directions for the night, Wheeler was not in sight. It seemed he was sensibly preparing for bed behind his private screen.

I found him half undressed—his lithe figure was that of an athlete of twenty. He looked up with some of the strange light still in his eyes.

"I came to say good-night!" was my emotional outburst.

"Good-night," was his melodramatic response.

It was down two flights of stairs that I noticed it was no longer night, but three in the morning.

Adverse Fate seemed to have exhausted itself in the fourteen hours of torture. From that time on everything turned to good luck. The general report was that I had cured a desperate case by marvelous skill. The congratulations from all sides kept me in a continual blushing dumbness.

Then, oddly enough, all effects of the atropin vanished in two days, except a violent dislike for alcohol in every form, which persisted for weeks—long enough to effect a permanent cure.

Stored away with the records of the poison case are the wedding-cards of Mrs. Archer and the Warden, dated from their beautiful place in a Western State. Mrs. Archer's thanks actually drove me to flight. As for the girl, I hinted before that she would take a story by herself—and she did.

It was some days after the Warden left for good that Sister Mary and her companions made their next visit to the prison. I never shall forget the picture as she sat, absorbed in talk with Wheeler, on the bench opposite the door I had entered.

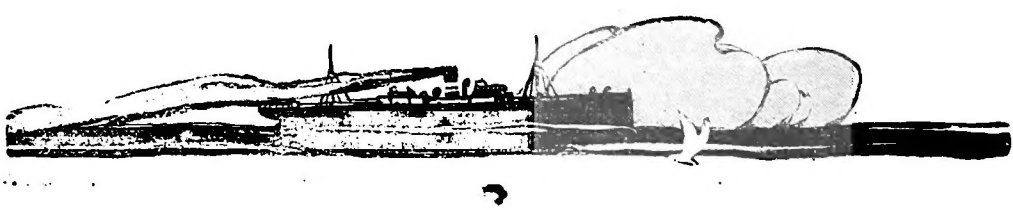
Wheeler was the one to look up and discover me, before I could get into the office.

Disregarding my grimaces, he sprang up, ran to me and seized my hand in that marvelous soft steel-firm grip; and drew me, blushing and hanging back like an awkward dunce, to Sister Mary:

"Here he is, Sister Mary!" he called, face lighted up with a boyish pride. "Here's our jewel!"

Through a mist I heard her thanking me, so sweetly and warmly, for all I had "done for her boys," while she held my hand and looked into my face with pure blue eyes.

It was of no use to try—I simply could not say a word. I remember thinking of an old tale I had read—how a young squire, unexpectedly knighted by his queen, "could speke no worde." And I thought I had discovered the reason—he had a choking lump in his throat that would not down.



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